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Nemzetközi Hungarológiai Központ
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Zsuzsanna Bjørn Andersen

The Voice from Outside

A Study in the Reception of Georg Brandes in Hungary

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PREFACE

The idea of writing about Georg Brandes and his reception in Hungary first came to me in 1981, when I was looking through the Brandes Archive at the Royal Library. It turned out that an amazing number of Hungarians had been in contact with the Danish critic over the years. There were even some 'big names' in Hungarian intellectual circles among these correspondents. In 1984, I was awarded a travel grant to visit Hungary, and on that occasion I managed to uncover some of Brandes' replies from various archives in Budapest. Luck was also on my side when it came to locating reviews, articles and memoirs in various newspapers and periodicals. In 1985, a grant from the Danish Research Council for the Humanities enabled me to carry out concentrated work on the material that I had collected. Digging out old documents and reading faded letters has proved an exciting experience.

It has taken many years to complete this study and there are many people who deserve to be thanked.

My first thanks must go to the Danish Research Council for the Humanities, whose financial support made it possible for me to spend nine months working exclusively on this project and to have my book translated into English.

The invitation from MTA *Irodalomtudományi Intézete* (The Literary Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Science) helped me in my search through the various archives and collections.

While working on this book, I received help and encouragement from many quarters. Special thanks are due to

- my supervisors at Lund University, Oscar Lazar and Per Rydén, for their helpful advice,

- Geir Kjetsaa, University of Oslo, for his enduring interest and constant encouragement, which kept me going,

- Per Dahl, University of Aarhus, for his valuable bibliographical information, for his constructive criticism of my work and for his great assistance prior to the translation into English,

- Lars-Gunnar Larsson, University of Uppsala, for helping me to have my book published in an English version,

- my mother, Ilona Faragó, who collected material for me from libraries and supplied invaluable photocopies,

- István Heimlich, who has in effect provided me with a reference library over the years,

- Lene Schacke and Mette Dalsgaard, who read the manuscript in Danish and suggested a number of changes.

I would also like to thank the following institutions for their help and co-operation:

- the Royal Library and the University Library in Copenhagen, the Széchenyi Library and the Library of the Hungarian Academy of Science in Budapest, the Library of the Institute for Theatre Studies in Budapest, the University Library in Oslo, the Royal Library in Stockholm and the Institute of Eastern European Studies in Copenhagen, which afforded me shelter while I was writing this book. And last, but not least, I would like to thank the International Center of Hungarian Studies for publishing this book.

* * *

I was responsible for the translation of quotations from Hungarian sources into Danish, which were then translated into English together with rest of this book. Hungarian names are given in the original form. Quotations from Brandes are translations of the Danish text in *Samlede Skrifter* (Collected Works), unless otherwise stated. The archive materials including the letters appear in their original form; no attempt has been made to correct or edit them.

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> Die Aufgabe der Literaturgeschichte ist erst dann vollendet, wenn die literarische Produktion nicht allein synchron und diachron in der Abfolge ihrer Systeme dargestellt, sondern als *besondere Geschichte* auch in dem ihr eigenen Verhältnis zu *Allgemeinen Geschichte* gesehen wird.
>
> Hans Robert Jauss

INTRODUCTION

Since the death of Georg Brandes in 1927, research into his work has progressed steadily. Paul V. Rubow's thesis *Georg Brandes og hans Lærere* (Georg Brandes and his Teachers) appeared in the very year of Brandes' death and was followed by others, including Gunnar Ahlström's penetrating examination of the ideas behind *Hovedstrømninger i det 19de Aarhundredes Litteratur* (Main Currents in 19th Century Literature; henceforth *Main Currents*) from 1937.

Despite the war years, when the pointed lack of official support culminated in a ban on any celebration of the centenary of the critic's birth, research into Brandes' work did not come to a halt. A number of important works have been published since the beginning of the fifties. These include Henning Fenger's thesis from 1955 *Georg Brandes' Læreår* (Georg Brandes' Apprentice Years) and Bertil Nolin's *Den gode européen* (The Good European) (1965), both of which must be regarded as indispensible to research on Brandes. In the 1960s the works of Brandes began to be reissued; it was in these years that the biography of *Voltaire*, *Essays i udvalg* (Selected Essays), *Danske Digterportrætter* (Portraits of Danish Poets) and the monographs on *Søren Kierkegaard* and *Ludvig Holberg* were reprinted.

In 1966-67 the six volumes of *Main Currents* were reissued. This event was greeted with enthusiasm during the student revolt, for example by the literary historian Johan Fjord Jensen, who recommended a 'pro-revolt' reading of Brandes' masterpiece. Fjord Jensen's desire for a reinterpretation shows that the writings of the Danish critic have not lost any of their topicality, seeing that they are 'used', in the true sense of the word, in surprising contexts. In the debate for and against the European Community package in 1986, for example, the left-wing Socialist Committee for Europe made references to Brandes the European.

The centenary of the first of Brandes' famous lectures, which was delivered on 3 November 1871, was duly celebrated at the University of Copenhagen, and was further commemorated by the publication of a

collection of essays, *Den politiske Georg Brandes* (The Political Georg Brandes) (1973), edited by Hans Hertel and Sven Møller Kristensen. In 1978, Morten Borup published Georg Brandes' *Breve til Forældrene* (Letters to the Parents); a publication that must be acknowledged as an important addition to the collections of letters that had already been published, *viz. Georg og Edvard Brandes. Brevveksling med nordiske Forfattere og Videnskabsmænd, 1-8* (Georg and Edvard Brandes. Correspondence with Scandinavian Writers and Scientists, 1-8), edited by Morten Borup *et al.*, 1939-42; *Correspondance de Georg Brandes, 1-4*, edited by Paul Krüger, 1952-66. In the same year, 1978, an international symposium with the title "Georg Brandes and Europe" was held in Copenhagen. Material presented here was published in a special edition of the periodical *Orbis Litterarum* called *The Activist Critic*. In 1984, Pil Dahlerup defended her doctoral thesis, *Det moderne gennembruds kvinder* (The Women of the Modern Breakthrough) (1983), which contains a well-argued critique of Brandes as the "patriarchal critic", who neither supported nor gave sufficient recognition to Scandinavian women writers. Nevertheless, Dahlerup's book includes a tribute to Brandes, in his capacity as campaigner for the emancipation of women in Scandinavia.

It should also be mentioned that a comprehensive, foreign bibliography of Brandes' works is now being compiled, which will supplement the Danish bibliography that is also on the way. Both bibliographies are being prepared by a team of researchers led by Per Dahl. Furthermore, a biography of Brandes, by Jørgen Knudsen, is in progress. The first volume was published in 1985 under the title *Frigørelsens vej. 1842-1877* (The Road to Freedom. 1842-1877). The second volume followed in 1988 and a third volume is in the pipeline. In 1985, Danish Television transmitted a programme that was entirely devoted to Brandes, in which Pil Dahlerup, Jørgen Knudsen, Lars-Olof Franzén and Carsten Jensen gave their respective views on Brandes and presented their revaluations of his work. Lars-Olof Franzén was so strongly inspired by Brandes that the latter appears in his autobiographical novel *De rätte älskarna* (The Proper Lovers) (1983) as an *alter ego* for the persona of the narrator, under the name of Jens Feuer.

The publishers *Tiderne Skifter* have responded impressively to a challenging task in their publication of Georg Brandes' *Udvalgte Skrifter* (Selected Works) (1984-87) in nine volumes, under the scholarly editorship of Sven Møller Kristensen. Here the work of the Danish critic, sixty years after his death, is seen in perspective. It should also be mentioned that The Society for Danish Language and Literature plans to publish a new series of Brandes' correspondence with foreigners, which will encompass the Russian,

Polish and Austro-Hungarian materials. In 1988, a one-volume collection entitled *The Modern Breakthrough in Scandinavian Literature* was published, edited by Bertil Nolin and Peter Forsgren. The central figure in most of the almost fifty contributions is, of course, Georg Brandes. In the same year, as was mentioned above, the second volume of Jørgen Knudsen's biography of Brandes appeared, *I modsigelsernes tegn* (Under the Sign of Contradictions), which describes the relatively short period between 1877 and 1883, when Brandes was living in Germany. These publications led to a heated debate in the daily newspaper *Politiken*.

If one considers the various labels that have been attached to Brandes over the years - from Nietzsche's well-known reference to "der gute Europäer und Culturmissionär" and the epithet "the lonely Dane" in René Wellek's *History of Modern Criticism* (1965) to the expressive phrase "the activist critic", which was the title of the Brandes symposium and the term "the patriarchal literary critic" that was recently used in Pil Dahlerup's thesis - then, taken together, they create a mosaic with striking contrasts. It appears that the "cultural missionary" was not completely 'lonely' and the progressive activist exerted a regressive, patriarchal authority over women writers in Scandinavia. That feelings can still run high is shown, for example, in Sřren Krarup's fierce debate with Leif Blćdel (1984), in which Krarup calls Brandes' "the man who, to our misfortune, created the modern breakthrough that has now ended up as the modern breakdown". Another attack comes from Professor Erik M. Christensen (*Nordica*, 1987), who thinks that Brandes was "a man eager for power who used literature to his own ends".

The latest publications show that Brandes' works have in recent years been subjected to new interpretations and evaluations. It is only natural that the reception of the critic should have undergone changes over the years, since it is based on the expectations of a given reading public at any given time. The aim of the present study is to throw light on Georg Brandes' reception in Hungary in the period between 1873 and 1927. At the same time, attention will be drawn to various social conditions that helped influence the nature of that reception during those years.

In many respects, Brandes' reception in the Hungarian-speaking areas differed from his reception in the other Eastern European countries. When attempting to estimate the extent of the Hungarians' knowledge of Brandes, it would be misleading to look only at the number of works by Brandes translated into Hungarian. The relative paucity of translation activities in Hungary is bound up with the fact that his potential readers had a sound knowledge of German, and were therefore able to read his works in that language.

Brandes' reception in Hungary is in part treated diachronically. Thus the description of his reception covers the period stretching from 1873, the year of the first mention of him in Hungarian periodicals, until his death in 1927. The most prominent and most significant elements in this historical sequence are the visits to Budapest in 1900 and 1907, respectively. The presentations of these important milestones include, among other things, an analysis of contemporary historical and political conditions as well as an account of the preparations for the visits, the actual visits and their reverberations in the press. The reconstruction of this diachronic sequence is based on historical reference works, literary histories, histories of ideas, newspaper articles, memoirs, personal letters and other archive materials.

The diachronic treatment, which places the Danish critic in a historical perspective, is supplemented by a synchronic treatment, presenting some of the characteristic contemporary reader reactions. The liberal, pro-Western European middle class were clearly responsive recipients, which led to closer contacts between Hungarian intellectual life and general European currents. Another positively inclined group is represented by three women readers, who actively aided the dissemination of Scandinavian literature through their own efforts as translators. Less forthcoming were the younger generation of left-wing radicals, whose attitude towards Brandes can best be described as problematic. For example, the world-famous Hungarian philosopher György Lukács was obviously strongly influenced by Brandes, yet he rarely makes any reference to him. Lukács may perhaps best be described as a 'reluctant' recipient.

In this presentation, there is interaction between the chapters that depict the 'horizontal line' between the important years in the reception of Georg Brandes in Hungary, i.e. the actual sequence of the reception, and the chapters that deal with differing, but characteristic attitudes among the recipients.

This study with its emphasis on reception history is based on hitherto unpublished archive material. This material comes partly from the Brandes Archive in the Royal Library in Copenhagen, from the Royal Library in Stockholm and the University Library in Oslo, and partly from Hungarian libraries (*Magyar Tudományos Akadémia Könyvtára*, *Országos Széchenyi Könyvtár* and *Egyetemi Könyvtár*). The exchanges of letters not only throw light on Brandes' personal contacts in Hungary, but also give some idea of the social changes that were a necessary precondition for his reception. This study of the history of his reception attempts to show Brandes as communicator, activator and inspirer and discusses Brandes' role in Hungarian intellectual life.

> The humanities would abdicate their function in society if they surrendered to a neutral scientism and indifferent relativism or if they succumbed to the imposition of alien norms required by political indoctrination.
>
> René Wellek

CHAPTER 1

METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Author, Text, Reader

Georg Brandes and Hungary forms a new constellation, a new approach in research on Brandes. One continues to be amazed at the extensiveness of the Danish critic's sphere of influence which, as we shall see, even reached as far as Hungary. Brandes came into contact with countless individuals, through the staggering number of journeys and lecture tours he made. His works were translated into most European languages and the national bibliographies of the various countries reveal the existence of a comprehensive, critical body of literature on the subject of his reception. Any Hungarian encyclopedia or history of world literature that was published from the turn of the century onwards, includes not only the name Georg Brandes but a detailed account of his work, too. One remarkable similarity between these articles is that they unanimously stress the importance of Brandes' role as a communicator and hail him as the leading literary figure of the age. In Antal Szerb's (1901-45) literary history, for example, which has deservedly been reprinted several times, we read:

> In Brandes' system of values there are two concepts: whatever is modern is valuable and whatever is out-of-date is of no value. He is regarded as the most famous proponent of the idea of evolution in literature ... Brandes was a spiritual force to be reckoned with in Europe at the turn of the century. It was he who turned Ibsen and Bjørnson into European celebrities, it was he who encouraged Nietzsche to press on with his life's work, and it was he who galvanized into action and liberated the young Scandinavian writers. Among the writers of his day, it would be difficult to find anyone to whom he did not give the important starting impulse.[1]

Even the latest, six-volume work on the history of Hungarian literature contains the following passage, in the section on literary trends in Europe around the year 1900:

> It was its affinity with reality that raised Scandinavian literature, too, to world class status. Brandes was its propagandist and its inspiring force. He formulated a modernism that is primarily concerned with the topicality of the message; it is materialistic, radical, anti-romantic and rationalist.[2]

The above-mentioned survey was intended to place Hungarian literature in a wider context and to demonstrate that there is constant interaction between national and world literature. The author points out that although the outlined movements and tendencies seldom, or only partly, exerted any direct influence, the development of modernism in Hungary would be unimaginable without the inspirations that came from outside.

The two quotations are specifically concerned with the new Scandinavian literature and with Brandes in his role as the initiator and communicator of this literature. He is rightly given the credit for 'the modern breakthrough'[3] in Scandinavia. It was an enormous project for which he succeeded in gaining the co-operation of most contemporary Scandinavian writers.[4] The expression 'the modern breakthrough', which Brandes invented, signalled that society's old system of norms had been breached. The writers of the 'breakthrough' declared open war on the Church, religion and the prevailing sexual morality, and advocated intellectual freedom, sexual equality, rationalism and liberalism in their works. The two quotations refer to the consequences of this breakthrough for the intellectual life of Europe in general and for Hungarian literature in particular.

Both quotations can be placed in the scientific tradition that takes its point of departure in the author's world of ideas and examines the influences that spring from this. They stress Georg Brandes' relationship to the Scandinavian writers and to contemporary intellectual currents in Europe. This comparative approach to the study of Brandes' work has a distinguished pedigree. Brilliant examples can be found in Vilhelm Andersen's essay "Georg Brandes og Tyskland" (Georg Brandes and Germany) (1912), Paul V. Rubow's thesis *Georg Brandes og hans lærere* (Georg Brandes and his Teachers) (1927) and *Georg Brandes' Briller* (Georg Brandes' Spectacles) (1932), Gunnar Ahlström's *Georg Brandes' Hovedstrømninger* (Georg Brandes' *Main Currents*), Henning Fenger's *Georg Brandes' læreår* (Georg

Brandes' Apprentice Years) (1955) and last, but not least, Bertil Nolin's study *Den gode européen* (The Good European). These works, which are indispensible for anyone involved in research on Georg Brandes today, document the influences that Brandes was subject to over the years. His reading, ideas, taste and critical practice are placed in the context of European traditions.

In this study, I take the opposite approach. The interaction between Georg Brandes and Hungary is seen from the point of view of the Hungarian reader. The reason for this is that whereas the above-mentioned critical works could point to influences and inspiration that Brandes had received from the European literature in question (German, French, Russian), there is very little evidence of the Danish critic's response to Hungarian literature. In this case it is far more interesting to investigate how the Hungarian readers reacted to what Brandes wrote and said.

These considerations concerning the role of the reader in the literary process have provided a methodology for the study of Georg Brandes' reception in Hungary. Approaches that focus on either the text or the author cannot give an adequate picture of the attitude of the reader. In order to demonstrate the mechanisms that were at work in connection with Brandes' reception, I have chosen a reader-oriented approach based on the theory of reception. The theory of reception was primarily constructed in order to make the systematic study of the reception of literary works possible. However, it also appears to be a very useful tool when studying the reception of *non-fiction* works, as it adds to the work "... a dimension that inalienably belongs to its aesthetic character as well as to its social function: the dimension of its reception and influence."[5]

Since the work is reader-oriented, it cannot be regarded as quite complete until it reaches the reader, that is, until it becomes the object of reception. It is not just a question of the work being primarily intended for the reader, the reader is actually necessary for the work to be realized. From an ontological point of view, the work does not exist until it has moved from the *active subject* that created it to a new *active subject*, the reader. In other words, the author's production-aesthetic activity corresponds to the reader's reception-aesthetic activity. During the process of reading the work is 'transformed' by the reader, but by engaging in this activity the reader himself is transformed: he widens the sphere of his own subject. While the reader receives the work and brings it to life, he invariably comes under its influence.

There is no clear distinction between the terms 'reception' and 'influence'; both contain elements of the two-way relationship that emerges when people read. During the reading process, the work becomes the object for the reader,

but at the same time he is influenced by it. The reader becomes both the subject of reception and the object of influence. In other words, the reader is simultaneously active and passive (receptive). In reality, what takes place is a special form of reciprocity.

The actual individual reception of a work is always related to a social process. When the reader chooses a work, he enters into a particular social relationship by virtue of his personal decision. The experiences he gains while absorbing a work influence his emotions and intellect. What is taking place is an 'internalisation' of experiences, communicated via literature. Literature can thus influence the reader's views and social behaviour, and in this way, literature exerts an influence on society. For this reason, we may conclude that the active reader-subject, through his receptive activity, adds a productive element to the values found in literary works.[6]

Working Definitions

The Theory of Reception

In many countries the word 'reception' evokes associations of the hotel world rather than of literature, as Hans Robert Jauss, one of the most celebrated proponents of the theory of reception, once wrote jokingly. The choice of the German term *Rezeption* suggests that what is being referred to is the theory of reception that was introduced at the University of Constance towards the end of the 1960s. The method marks a new direction, "a new paradigm",[7] in the field of literary research, in which the literary text is approached via the response of the reader.

To Jauss, literary history is above all a product of the author's writing activity and the reader's reception activity. He sees the necessary elimination of the chasm between literature and history, that is, between the aesthetic and the historical model of cognition, as his main task. In his opinion, both the Marxist and the Formalist school failed because they only considered "(...) *the literary fact* within the closed circle of an aesthetics of production and of representation."[8] The reader plays a very minor part in both of these literary theories. When orthodox Marxist aesthetics does consider the reader, it does so in the same way that it considers the author: it asks questions about the social position of the person concerned, or the latter is inferred from the social model in the work of fiction. The Formalist school only needs the reader as the observer of technique and idiom. Both theories

neglect the reader despite the fact that the literary work is primarily addressed to him. The aim of an aesthetics of reception is to restore the balance in the triangle that consists of author, text and reader, where the last of these is not merely a passive link or a necessary element in the chain of reaction but represents a history-creating energy. The historical existence of the literary work is unimaginable without the active contribution of the reader, since it is only through this that the work can undergo the process by which immediate understanding is transformed into critical understanding and passive reception becomes active.[9]

To Jauss, the perspective of the aesthetics of reception is more than the link between passive reception and active understanding. He talks of a continuous dialogue between the work and its public, and in this way he tries to bridge the gap between the aesthetic and the historical aspects of literature. The reader's relationship to literature appears to have both aesthetic and historical implications. The aesthetic implication can be seen in the fact that the reader's very first encounter with a work is accompanied by an aesthetic evaluation, in that he compares everything with his previous reading. The historical implication is apparent in the way that the earliest readers' experience of a text can be passed on as part of a 'chain of receptions' from generation to generation and can therefore play a decisive role in a work's historical significance and aesthetic value. Two perspectives of a work can be observed in this process, in the form of two complementary principles: that of comtemporaneity and that of historical effect.[10]

Horizon of Expectations

Might there not be a danger that an analysis of a work or an author based on the history of their reception will turn out, at best, to be nothing more than a study of the prevailing tastes? To avoid this, one has to find empirical methods of locating a particular attitude in the reader towards a particular work, which forms the basis of his psychological reaction and subjective understanding. Jauss calls this attitude, which is at the very core of his theory, the 'horizon of expectations' (*Erwartungshorizont*).[11] The fact that a new work can become accessible, indeed, that it can become understandable at all, is due to a kind of 'prior knowledge' (*Vorverständnis*) in the reader. As with any other experience, prior knowledge, which forms part of the process of experience, is also involved in literary experience and makes a new work generally understandable. Even a newly published literary work is not a completely new work appearing in an informational vacuum, since the reader is prepared for a particular reception, a particular view of the text,

because of prior implicit signs, open and closed signals. These awaken memories in the reader of something he has read in the past so that the new text is met with prior knowledge and certain presuppositions.[12]

The reception and influence of a particular work can thus be described in terms of a set of expectations that is related to the reader's literary experience and also to his experience of life. Jauss distinguishes between a 'narrow' and a 'broad' horizon of expectations. The potential reader should be able to understand the new text in terms of both the narrow literary horizon and the broader social horizon; the latter corresponding to his experience of life, his social existence.

The term 'horizon of expectations' has many advantages, not least that it allows a systematic study of the course of the reception through history. It differs from traditional descriptions of a writer's success and influence, in that, in addition to following the reputation of the author in a historical context, it also examines the historical circumstances and changes in society.

Although closely linked with Jauss' aesthetics of reception, the term 'horizon of expectations' was used as early as 1960 in Hans Georg Gadamer's *Truth and Method*, where the author explains the historical nature of understanding. At this point, it is necessary to make a short digression in order to provide a theoretical background.

When Gadamer describes the actual process of understanding, he does not connect it to any particular discipline, but construes it as something that is important and central to the social existence of human beings. It is this existence, with its prejudices and presuppositions, that makes understanding possible. Every time something is interpreted, the interpretation will actually be based on prior knowledge. For an interpretation can never be made unless one has a prior concept of whatever one is being confronted with. When discussing prior knowledge or prejudice (*Vorurteil*), Gadamer explains that in German the word has come to mean that one has a prior, 'ready-made' opinion that gets in the way of clear insight and openness towards new interrelations, although etymologically the word simply means that a judgement was made beforehand. According to Gadamer, it was the Age of Enlightenment that was responsible for the term falling into disrepute. Prejudice or prior knowledge, since it forms part of the actual historical reality, never gets in the way of understanding, rather it is a precondition for it. He writes:

> What is necessary is a fundamental rehabilitation of the concept of prejudice and a recognition of the fact that there are legitimate prejudicies, if we want to do justice to man's finite, historical mode of being.[13]

To Gadamer, rehabilitation of the term means that one's prior concepts should be regarded as a basic precondition in any situation involving interpretation. Thus this theory differs from earlier ones in that the historical reality of the interpreter is not regarded as a barrier to understanding but rather as the opposite.

In his description of the process of understanding, Gadamer goes on to introduce the term 'horizon of understanding', a term borrowed from Husserl's phenomenology, which he adapts for use in his own system. He points out that the horizon of understanding is an indispensible precondition for anyone's perception of a situation. But it should be regarded as something "into which we move and that moves with us"[14] rather than as a fixed, rigid position. This horizon of understanding is created by the prior knowledge that everyone carries around with him all the time. And the actual process of understanding (reception) occurs as a fusion of the horizon of understanding of the individual and the historical horizon (*Horizontverschmelzung*).

Gadamer insists that every interpretation is at the same time also an application (*Anwendung, Applikation*): "The truth is that there is always contained in historical understanding the idea that the tradition reaching us speaks into the present and must be understood in this mediation - indeed, as this mediation"[15] In other words, understanding is application in the present. This application need not necessarily be understood as an act, however. It is more a question of realizing the understanding, of making it concrete. According to Gadamer's model, when a reader encounters a text, he enters into a dialogue with the past and it is this process that leads to understanding, to active reception. As can be seen from the above, Gadamer's ideas prepared the ground for the theory of reception.

Here, the term 'horizon of expectations' has been given a 'broad', epistemological, but nevertheless still *abstract* definition. Karl Robert Mandelkow tackles the problem more explicitly. He argues that the horizon of expectation consists of several layers. There are *expectations with regard to a specific period of time*, which can be delimited according to prevailing traditions and conventions and which the new work becomes part of or distances itself from. There is also an *expectation with regard to the text* so that a particular (often earlier) text by an author establishes a norm that his later works are expected to resemble. Finally, there is an *expectation with*

regard to the author, that is, an expectation with respect to the 'image' that represents a particular aspect of the writer's activity, which can thus form the basis of his general reception.[16]

The assumption that the reader meets a new work in a definable horizon of expectations is a methodological precondition for the present study of Georg Brandes' reception in Hungary. But it is no easy matter to define or even to describe the horizon of expectation of readers, especially when dealing with past readers. For the problem is how to reconstruct the horizon of expectations of a particular period from clearly limited material. There are usually documents in existence in which people express their views (private letters, memoirs, diaries, etc.), from which the horizon of expectations of earlier readers can be recreated. But since the empirical material, by the very nature of things, is often rudimentary, a case can be made for studying the relationships that exist between social conditions and literary expression, between the historical and the literary model of cognition.

The question of prior knowledge of different readers or different groups of readers can be posed with more authority if the non-subjective factors that condition the effectiveness of the text are made clear beforehand. This touches on another important aspect, *the reconstruction of the horizon of expectations.* "Reconstructed in this way, the horizon of expectiations of a work allows one to determine its artistic character by the kind and the degree of its influence on a presupposed audience.[17] The way a work is received at the given, historical moment at which it is introduced (this includes the responses of both the public and the critics) tells us something about the importance of the work and its significance compared with other contemporary works. Hence, the history of reception must concern itself with the study of the social and economic aspects that form the basis of the structure of the literary public. The reconstruction of these aspects is the methodological consequence of applying a theory of reception based on social science.

By reconstructing the horizon of expectations, one is in fact entering the domain of the sociology of literature, since the main focus of interest is on different groups of recipients, on the views they represent and why they represent those particular views. Every work of fiction has its own particular public, which can be defined both historically and sociologically; every author is dependent on his public's background, views and ideology, and a precondition for literary success is that the work "expresses what the group expects" and "[it] presents the group with its own image".[18] Thus Robert Escarpit, in his sociology of literature, explains literary success as a confluence of the intention behind the work and the expectations of the

group of recipients.[19] This interaction and the ability of the so-called 'arbitors of taste' (*Geschmacksträgertypen*) to make their voices heard determine the success of a work or an author.[20] This observation presupposes empirical research on readers, about which Jauss, for one, is sceptical. He thinks that research into the social conditions of the reader cannot give valid answers, since the documentation is often dubious and it can easily end up as a mere catalogue of social roles, class and group prejudice.

But is it possible to demonstrate different types of reception in different social groups? The fact that the social horizon of expectations is linked to the reader's experience of life, as Jauss maintains that it is, lends support to the assumption that readers from different social groups absorb/receive in different ways. Immediate reception is only possible for a limited group of people, viz. for those who 'are in the same boat' as the author, the kindred spirits with whom he hopes to communicate. This group could be his contemporaries or, more precisely, a group that shares his own social and cultural standpoint.

The reconstruction of the horizon of expectations, within which a work from the past was created and received, makes it possible to ask the question how contemporary readers could have viewed and understood works. This makes us look at the social functions of aesthetic experiences and in this way we can reconstruct a horizon of expectations, even when only a small number of reader reactions have survived. In order to do so, it is necessary to take a giant step, to move away from traditional literary history towards the aesthetics and history of reception, i.e. towards the production, communication and reception of people's aesthetic activities. To put it in a different way, research into reception represents a communicative bridge to an unknown past.[21]

These considerations about the nature of reception and the prior assumptions of the public when they meet a new work have provided a useful framework for the study of Georg Brandes' reception in Hungary. The actual primary material (i.e. the human sources such as personal letters, memoirs, newspaper and magazine articles, etc.) led quite naturally towards the history of reception as a suitable working method. This choice also meant that both culturo-sociological and historical aspects had to be included in depictions of Hungarian society, which was Brandes' potential recipient. From a reception or, as it were, applied historical point of view, certain questions need to be asked: What was the reaction in Hungary to what Brandes wrote? Why did the reception follow the course it did? How were the ideas interpreted and with what effects on Hungarian society? The account that follows is an attempt to answer these questions.

Notes to Chapter 1:

1 Antal Szerb, *A világirodalom története* (A History of World Literature) (1941), Budapest 1962, p. 850.

2 *A Magyar irodalom töténete 1905-től 1919-ig* (A History of Hungarian Literature 1905-1919), Budapest 1965, pp. 49-50.

3 This expression (*modern áttörés* in Hungarian) was introduced in the essay collection *Det moderne Gjennembruds Mænd* (The Men of the Modern Breakthrough), 1883.

4 Bertil Nolin points out that although this way of defining a period is often an oversimplification, it does help one to get an overview of Scandinavian literature in the period 1870-1905. See *The Modern Breakthrough in Scandinavian Literature 1870-1905*, Proceedings of the 16th Study Conference of the IASS, Gothenburg 1988, pp. 7-11.

5 Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*. Minneapolis, 1982, p. 18.

6 *Ibid.*, pp. 22-24.

7 Hans Robert Jauss, "Paradigmawechsel in der Literaturwissenschaft", *Linguistische Berichte*, 1969, 3, pp. 44-56.

8 Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, op. cit., p. 18.

9 *Ibid.*, p. 19.

10 *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.

11 *Ibid.*, pp. 22ff.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 23.

13 Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, London, 1975, (1979), p. 246.

14 *Ibid.*, p. 271.

15 *Ibid.*, p. 293.

16 See Karl Robert Mandelkow, "Probleme der Wirkungsästhetik", *Jahrbuch für Internationale Germanistik*, 1970, 2, pp. 79-80.

17 Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward the Aesthetic of Reception*, op.cit., p. 25.

18 Cited from Robert Escarpit by Hans Robert Jauss, *ibid.*, p. 26.

19 Robert Escarpit, *Sociologie de la littérature*, Paris 1958. Cited from *Irodalomszociológia*, translated by Arpád Vigh, Budapest 1973, p. 94.

20 See Levin L. Schücking, *Soziologie der literarischen Geschmackbildung*, Berne-Munich 1961, p. 55.

21 I can here only deal with the main ideas from the early phase of reception theory around 1970. For more recent developments see e.g. Rien T. Segers, *Dynamics and Progress in Literary Studies*, Siegen Lumis, 1993, Lumis-Publications no. 35.

> No one who lacks the ability to be influenced can obtain any genuine enjoyment from travelling, nor can anyone whose self-activity in response to received impressions is too weak. It is necessary to immerse oneself in the foreign element, while extracting one's own Ego from it, controlled from within.
>
> Georg Brandes

CHAPTER 2

GEORG BRANDES ACHIEVES FAME IN HUNGARY

The Much-Travelled Literary Critic

Georg Brandes visited Budapest for the first time in 1900. This destination might at first sight seem surprising, since it lay outside the routes usually followed by the Danish critic in Central and Eastern Europe. But it soon becomes clear that the trip to Hungary fits neatly into the series of lecture tours that he undertook over the years. The journeys served an important purpose for Brandes; they formed a particular aspect of his work, both as a literary critic and as a political activist. In addition to being impressively prolific as a writer, he also travelled widely and gave numerous lectures. He was, in fact, breathing fresh life into the old touring tradition. These journeys did not merely give Brandes, who appears to have been brilliant at lecturing and reciting, an opportunity for personal expression, they also opened up endless opportunities for disseminating new thoughts and new movements in new surroundings. At the same time he made a close study of these new surroundings and allowed himself to be influenced by the mood of the public and by the political climate of the location in question. He brought back home with him the impressions that he harvested on his trips abroad. One cannot but agree with Nietzsche's often quoted words about Brandes, for the Danish critic was indeed a "cultural missionary" in the true sense of that expression.

From the point of view of the readers, personal meetings with the author acted as a stimulus to the reading of his works. If the prose style of Brandes was captivating, so was his way of lecturing. He was really in his element on the lecture dais. One of his contemporaries, the author Henri Nathansen,

described the 42-year-old lecturer as follows:

> There stands Georg Brandes. Pale and sallow in the light of the gas lamp that falls over the soft, yet firm chestnut hair ... He is in full evening dress, slim and erect, his hands behind his back ... Images of young animals pass before my eyes ... antelopes, stallions, panthers ... His voice was soft yet firm, pliant and resiliant, not exactly beautiful in its sound ... but ingratiatingly beautiful to the mind and the imagination ... Every single detail had been planned, every stress, every pause, every rise and every fall had been studied, almost as an actor rehearses his part. But this 'rehearsing' only applied to the rigid, inviolable form, to the control. The content, the 'play', was inspired and animated by the abandonment, the possession, in which his whole being opened up and found release in all its glittering, scintillating and vaguely gleaming richness, while he spokae.[1]

Whatever one might think of this personal and rather idealised description of Brandes, one has to admit that the direct contact with the public was an extra string on which Brandes was able to play with supreme virtuosity.

Generally speaking, the tours served a dual purpose. They took Brandes abroad, affording him the opportunity to get a brief, intense glimpse of the cultural and political life of the country in question, while also giving him the chance, as a critic, to present literary evaluations and to introduce Scandinavian literature. He had the ability to "immerse himself in the foreign element", but at the same time he demonstrated his "self-activity in response to the received impressions".[2] This was the basic pattern for Brandes, which applied to most of his tours. It was especially true in Eastern Europe, to a lesser extent in Central Europe. His dual purpose is more visible in connection with his visits to Russia and Poland than with those to Hungary and Bohemia. More scholarly interest has certainly been displayed on the subject of the reception he received in Russia and Poland.[3] But what was the reason for the greater interest that he showed in Poland and Russia?

At the end of the last century, both these countries found themselves on the margins of Europe, and Brandes felt, with good reason, that he was showing a pioneering spirit in accepting the invitations and going off on these lecture tours abroad. The sudden wave of interest in Slavonic culture, which swept through Europe in the last quarter of the 19th century, also swept Brandes along. He was a great admirer of Russian literature. This

response had its roots in his youth. As he himself later noted in his autobiographical *Levned* (Life), when he was a student he identified strongly with Lermontov's novel *A Hero of Our Time*: "I had the bewildering feeling that for the first time in my life I had encountered my innermost, as yet dormant self, understood, interpreted and reproduced in a magnified form."[4] In other words, Russian literature formed part of Brandes' mental baggage right from his early years. This must be one reason why, when conditions in both Denmark and Germany seemed hopeless to him, he considered making his home in Moscow, among other places.[5]

Brandes had acquired his knowledge of Russian literature via the early German and French translations. In the 1880s, when Tolstoy, Turgenev and Dostoyevsky were published in Western European languages, Russian literature had its breakthrough. At a stroke, Russian novels became all the rage in Western Europe. Western European critics and readers detected an exuberant exotic quality in Russian literature that was felt to be very different from the traditional patterns of their own brands of literature. It was a "challenge from the periphery",[6] a young, unknown literature had evolved, far from the dominant literary centres, and this was a challenge to Brandes' critical mind.

It was not only the literature that aroused interest, but also the country. The previously closed-off Russia was now visited by Westerners, who described their experiences in a series of informative monographs. As shown by the Swedish literary scholar Bertil Nolin, in his thesis on Brandes and his relationship to Slavonic literature, the Danish critic made good use of these sources.

In short, Brandes was better prepared for his travels when he went to Russia than when he went to Budapest. His prior knowledge was reflected in his choice of themes for the lectures. He could touch on subjects that were topical for the audiences and take up various aspects of Russian literature for discussion.[7] The physical frameworks of the visits were also different in Russia and Hungary. Both his visits to Russia, in 1887 and 1895 respectively, were long ones. Indeed, the lecture tour to St. Petersburg and Moscow in 1887 was even extended to include a private stay in South Russia, where he got to know the country at close quarters.

Brandes' sympathy for the other Slavonic country, Poland, was undoubtedly awakened by the international press. The country's passionate struggle against its oppressors, which resulted in bloodshed both in 1831 and 1863, provoked loud protests everywhere. As a Western intellectual, it was only natural that he should sympathise with the Poles. But in addition to the positive interest and participation that he usually extended to all peoples and

minorities who were fighting for their national independence (as, for instance, the Flemings were doing for linguistic equality),[8] Brandes admitted in his autobiography *Lerned* (Life) that he never felt more at home anywhere than in Poland.[9] The visits in 1885, 1886 and 1887 left a deep impression on him, as evidenced in his travel book, *Impressions of Poland.* In this book, Brandes writes about the stay, the lectures and the valuable human contacts. His by then wide knowledge of Polish political conditions meant that to the great delight of his audience, he was able to introduce political issues into his lectures. By using expressions of sympathy, the Danish critic let his audience know that he was on their side and that he supported them in their passive resistance against their oppressors.[10]

On returning home, Brandes used his manifold experiences and impressions as the starting-point for a series of lectures about conditions in Russia and Poland. These lectures form the basis of his travel books, *Impressions of Russia* and *Impressions of Poland.* Both undoubtedly served to disseminate knowledge of political and cultural developments in the Slavonic countries. Although the books occasionally draw over-hasty conclusions, they nevertheless contain a wealth of material and a host of delicate, precise observations. They still have much to offer today's readers.

On trying to evaluate the effect the visits to the Slavonic countries had on Brandes, it has to be said that Poland and Russia seem to have made a stronger impression than Hungary. The reason for this might possibly be found in Brandes' own attitude towards the latter country. The Danish critic probably regarded Hungary as an integral part of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy; it was nowhere near so exotic as Russia. The distance - a mere five hours from Vienna - meant that he still felt himself to be at home in 'Mittel-Europa'.

But there was something else that prevented him from coming into closer contact with Hungary, viz. the general lack of information about Hungarian literature and art. From a conversation that Brandes had during his first visit to Budapest in 1900,[11] we know that the Dane regretted his ignorance of conditions in Hungary and declared that he felt handicapped since he could neither read the language nor get hold of good, adequate translations of contemporary Hungarian literature. It was an "unbekannte Welt"[12] to him, as he writes in a letter to the writer Sándor Fischer (1853-88), who had given him a massive German biography of Sándor Petőfi, the Hungarian national poet.[13] The books that Brandes received from Hungary over the years were undoubtedly useful, and he felt - to use his own expression - "Kentnissen und Eindrücken bereichert".[14] But the Danish literary critic had to be induced to visit Hungary before he could get some feeling for the atmosphere and form

his own impression of that country's cultural life. It was Georg Brandes' easily stirred curiosity to explore the unknown that led to his departure.

Hungary after the Compromise of 1867

A hundred years on, the last few decades of the 19th century in Hungary seem to be a period full of paradoxes. The country was poised on the threshold of a new age; eager for renewal, yet still clinging to its traditions; desiring independence, yet remaining in a state of dependency. On 8 June 1867, the Emperor Franz Joseph was crowned King of Hungary in the historic Matthias Church in Buda. This put an end to the feud between the Habsburgs and the Hungarian nation that had gone on for three and a half centuries. On 30 May 1867, a week before this symbolic event took place, a treaty was signed between Austria and Hungary, officially referred to as the "Compromise",[15] which legally united the two countries in a dual state, the "kaiserliche und königliche" monarchy of Austria-Hungary. Not only did the new state share the same king, it also shared the same ministries for Foreign Affairs, Defence and Finance and had a common economy.[16]

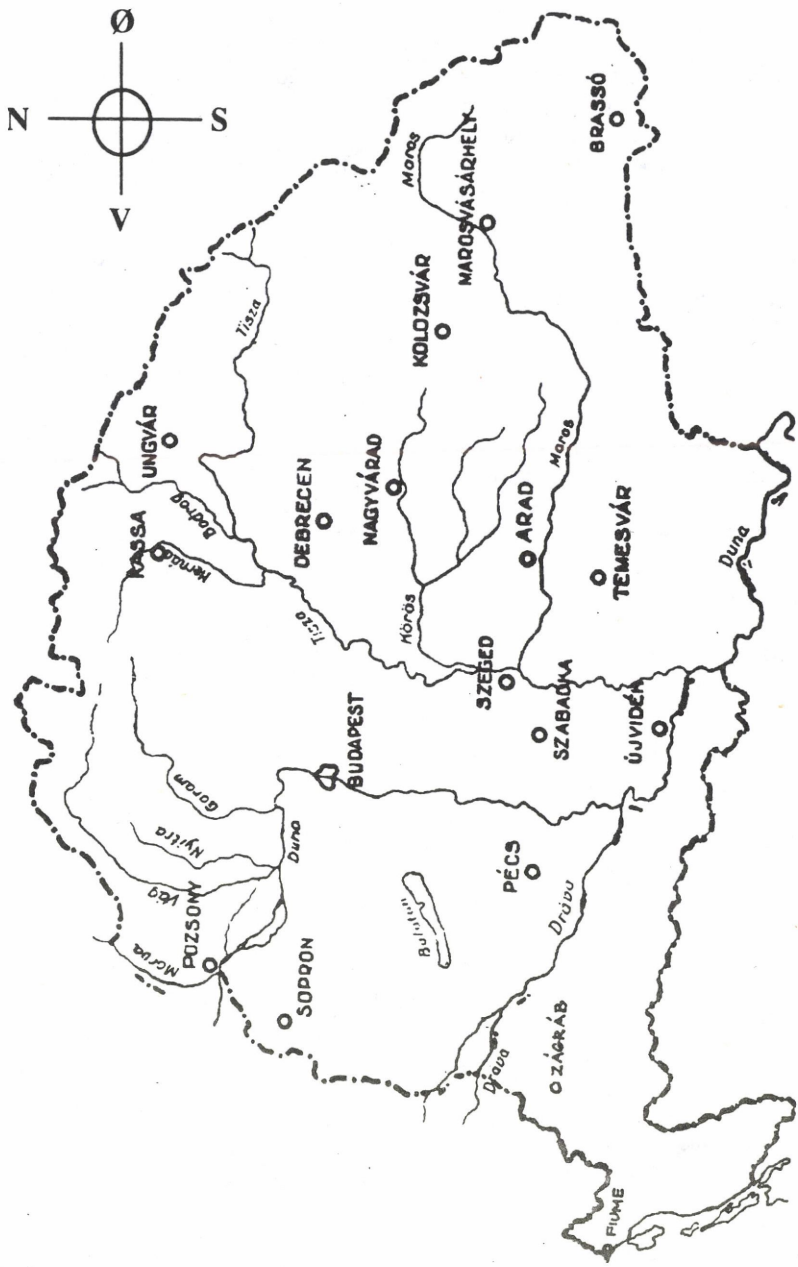
The architect of this treaty was the clever practitioner of *realpolitik* Ferenc Deák (1803-76) who, with great pragmatic insight and persistent political arguments, carried through this still controversial and frequently criticized act. Most historians[17] today, however, acknowledge that given the tense political and social situation during the period that followed the 1848 Revolution, a compromise with Austria was the only realistic solution.

The long, hard struggle for freedom started on 15 March 1848 as a bloodless revolution. The February Revolution in Paris led surprisingly quickly to one further east. But whereas the political revolt in France was inspired by a social, even a socialist idea, the equivalent revolt in Hungary could best be described as a national uprising. The year-long struggle for freedom was to cost the land dear. Sándor Petőfi (1823-49) fell at the Battle of Segesvár. The intellectual and military leaders of the revolution were brutally executed. The life of General Artúr Görgey (1818-1916) was spared, though, after diplomatic intervention; he was let off with banishment to a small village in Austria. Lajos Kossuth (1802-94), the leader of the independent Hungarian government, fled the country, together with a number of leading political activists, including Ferenc Pulszky (1814-97). Severe punishment of the insubordinate Hungarian nation now followed. Between 1849 and 1867 - the so-called Bach Period named after Alexander Bach (1811-93), the Austrian Minister for Home Affairs - the country's intellectual and political temperature sank to below freezing-point.

During these difficult years, when the Austrian bureaucracy and police kept a close watch on the Hungarians, several attempts were made to restore the country's political existence, but both diplomatic and military initiatives failed because of the lack of interest displayed by the European great powers. Although Kossuth won a great deal of sympathy during his political odyssey to England and the United States, the huge waves of emotional support did not really result in much practical help.

But what kind of political solution was possible, given Hungary's situation? There were only two realistic possibilities. The first was to retain the old constitution of 1847, based on the so-called "Pragmatic Sanction" of 1713, which affirmed the indivisible "Gesamtmonarchie" with a joint ruler, who was, however, required to respect Hungarian law. The second possiblity was based on the "April Laws" of 1848, according to which Hungary's constitutional relationship with Austria was to be maintained, but with an accountable Hungarian Prime Minister as leader of an independent Hungarian parliament. A third, but unimplementable solution was proposed by the *emigrés*, led by Kossuth. They wanted complete autonomy, in accordance with the Declaration of Independence of 14 April 1848. The conservative, pro-Habsburg aristocracy preferred to return to the conditions that prevailed before 1848, as though the revolution had never taken place. Finding himself between these two flanks, Ferenc Deák opted to carry through the above-mentioned treaty, which was based on the "Pragmatic Sanction" and which included an accountable, Hungarian prime minister, as proposed in the "April Laws".

Yet it was far from everyone who thought the establishment of the Dual Monarchy a satisfactory solution to Hungary's political situation after the failure of the War of Independence of 1848-49. The "constitutional and parliamentary autonomy" within the monarchy that formed the cornerstone of the treaty was regarded by the treaty's opponents as an insult to the nation. The question of national sovereignty continued to be a very sensitive issue. Two distinct fronts were created, closely linked to partisanship for or against the treaty, which were to have a strong influence on political consciousness for many years to come. This 'for-or-against' attitude was almost an automatic reflex that reacted with small twitches to all irritations brought on by political and cultural developments - no matter how trivial each one might be. But the treaty was a reality and Hungary had to learn to live with Austria. In the last analysis, the treaty was responsible for the sudden awakening from the dreams of freedom, for the realisation that the time was more than ripe for self-examination and for a review of the country's relationship with the rest of Europe. The vulnerable, antagonistic,



Map of Hungary as it looked in 1867. Croatia and Slovenia are included.

intellectual atmosphere led indirectly to a steadily increasing interest in affairs and events outside the borders of Hungary.

The political changes could not help but affect the whole of society. The parliamentary system that formed part of the treaty created a basis for a bourgeois-liberal society. Of course, this tendency was already apparent in 1848, but after the treaty the process speeded up. With the growing industrialisation, the brisk construction of roads and railways and the bold entrepreneurial spirit, agriculture was suddenly pushed down into second place. As a result of the changes in the economic base, the proportion of workers involved in agriculture declined from 75% of the labour force in 1869 to 64% in 1910, while the proportion of those involved in industry grew from 10% to 23.3%.[18]

The property-owning aristocracy managed to acquire a powerful position for themselves in the new, capitalist development. No self-respecting bank or industrial concern could do without an aristocratic-sounding surname on its board. However, it was a time of decline for the Hungarian peasantry - the two million peasant families and three and a half million so-called agrarian proletarians who formed the majority of the Hungarian population. They found it increasingly difficult to make ends meet. Small farmers and smallholders simply had to stop trying to make a living out of agriculture. For many of them an enforced move to a town or emigration to America was a last desperate attempt to keep body and soul together. Entire villages in Hungary were depopulated at the turn of the century.

But the strongest ferment and the biggest social unrest could be observed in the rapidly growing middle class, the actual nucleus of which was formed by the lower reaches of the aristocracy and the landed gentry. This so-called 'historical middle class', which had formed Hungary's middle class during the 1848 Revolution, began to use the English term 'gentry' to describe themselves in the 1870s. By doing this they hoped to draw a distinction between themselves, with their inherited, aristocratic rights, and the increasingly powerful, new bourgeois middle class. At this time the gentry were already in debt and had sunk into partial social decline; by the end of the century they had to put up with leading a middle class existence in the towns, without the financial security they had previously enjoyed as landowners. As a result of this social descent, the gentry had to apply for posts in the newly created administration and received, by way of consolation, several leading posts in the ministries and in the state administration.

Queen Elisabeth, dressed in deep mourning, lays a wreath on the catafalque of Ferenc Deák, while an angel (the genie of time) casts an illuminating glow over the dead statesman, who implemented a treaty between Austria and Hungary. The ribbons on the wreath symbolise the interdependence of the Dual Monarchy. (Painting by Mihály Zichy)

The actual bourgeois middle class was a veritable hotchpot of people. The Hungarian bourgeoisie was a melting pot that absorbed individuals with very different social and racial backgrounds. The wealthiest and most numerous minority groups were the Germans (Schwabians) and the Jews. In 1868 parliament passed a resolution that gave equal rights to all citizens, whatever their nationality or religion. This resolution led to an increased flow of people into the capital, especially of those belonging to the Jewish minority. In 1870 there were approximately 45,000 Jews in Budapest, but by 1890 the number had risen to 102,000.[19] The process of assimilation took place very quickly, though not always, of course, without problems. In the last quarter of the 19th century, second and third generation Jews became both linguistically and culturally assimilated. It would be wrong, though, to regard this element of the population as an economically, socially or culturally homogeneous, integrated group. Nevertheless, these young members of the bourgeoisie soon realized their strength and in many areas they became the leaders of fashion.[20] They were born freethinkers with a great deal of sympathy for political radicalism and it seemed natural to them to seek inspiration from abroad, especially from Western Europe where the middle classes had stronger traditions and a more solid background.

Thus, in the wake of the treaty, a vigorous middle class emerged, which quickly established itself as consumers and producers of literature. In the twenty years between 1870 and 1890, a Hungarian intelligentsia grew up, which was both interested and active in literature. The earlier link between membership of the aristocracy and level of education was quickly disintegrating. The aristocratic landed gentry had gradually lost its earlier patent on culture. The dissemination of literature was no longer a lofty national duty but a more down-to-earth, practical question of profitability and economic interests.

Budapest played a leading role in every aspect. In 1872 the twin towns of Buda and Pest were joined together. This wonderful capital city on both banks of the Danube, which took away the breath of foreign visitors, succeeded within the space of a few years in becoming the country's financial centre and the unrivalled focus of intellectual life. The area around Budapest was still unusually varied as far as the nationality of its people was concerned. But by 1867 72% of its population spoke Hungarian.[21] As mentioned above, two new ethnic groups were particularly prominent in the demographic composition of the city: the German administrators who had been moved to Hungary after the crushing of the 1848 Revolution, and the immigrants of Jewish extraction. Both of these 'foreign' elements helped swell the size of the reading public. Many of the 'newcomers' were absorbed

into the city's intellectual middle class, which was strongly differentiated, not just in terms of social and national origins but also as far as age and educational background were concerned. The older generation had a thorough grounding in German, while the younger generation tried to close their ears to anything in that language. The language hung on, however, in spite of this political aversion.

So what did this intellectual middle class read? As consumers, they had their own needs that could best be catered for by newspapers, periodicals and monthly magazines. There had never been such a profusion of these organs, encompassing such a comprehensive range of subjects, as there was in this period. And who wrote this wide-ranging, varied material? This too was done by the intellectual middle class. A circle of writers belonging to the decayed gentry class, who might be described as intellectual proletarians, were particularly prominent on the literary and cultural magazines.

There is a reason why these periodicals were the favourite reading material of the Hungarian public. Literary publications were one of the most effective channels for communicating the idea of liberalism. To the Hungarians in the 1870s, the concept of liberalism was associated with a free, independent nation rather than with a free, independent individual.[22]

Most magazines of that period maintained the 18th century tradition of regarding its most important function as that of informing the reading public. The material was presented in a didactic form; as in *The Spectator*, the readers were supposed to learn "after their reading what to think",[23] they should first and foremost learn how to relate the foreign material to the Hungarian reality. Everything could be both written and read in a transposed Hungarian context.

Naturally, there were differing views in the active generation of authors as to how the liberal, cultural policy of the age should be implemented. But notwithstanding these divergent opinions, all agreed that literature should be made to perform a new, demanding task, the essence of which was that national romanticism should make way for a committed, realistic literature, in harmony with modern European trends. In other words, the isolated national literature should now enter into a fruitful dialogue with 'world literature'. The 1870s generation were convinced that their positivist liberalism was the only real way forward. There was ferment in these literary activists and "they saw themselves as the men of the future".[24] With a fine sense of topicality, the literary *avant-garde* of the period had noted the changed function of literature in their journals. While they wrote their deeply felt, programmatic articles, they kept an eye on the literary stage of Europe.

The most obvious route to contacts with Western Europe was via Vienna, but this direct link turned out to be not always traversible. The antipathy towards the Imperial City that had developed over the centuries forced the Hungarians to seek alternative routes, especially in the period immediately after the treaty. The channel through which Hungarian intellectuals received their information and new impulses was thus not Vienna, as one might have expected. Political aversion drove them to Berlin, to the power centre of Wilhelm II and Bismarck, which experienced a dynamic development after the Peace Treaty of 1871. In just under ten years, up to the end of 1880, it had grown into a city of a million inhabitants. The Hungarians' orientation towards Berlin in the last quarter of the 19th century was of crucial importance to the way in which Georg Brandes was received. That Brandes aroused the interest of the 1870s generation was by no means accidental. The "intellectual deafness to outside influences" of which Brandes had accused Denmark, was read in Hungary in a specific context of experience that was a natural consequence of the contemporary situation of the Hungarian readers.

Reviews of Emigrant Literature

When tracing the historical course of his reception, the obvious starting-point must be to attempt to pinpoint the first mention of Brandes in Hungary. However, the date of this - the beginning of 1873 - comes as something of a surprise. This early review of Brandes, which was one of the first foreign responses to the work of the Danish critic, was written by a newly qualified Master of Literature, László Névy (1841-1902). He reached Brandes via a somewhat unusual path. In 1861, he was ordained as a priest and worked as a teacher for his religious order with the Premonstratensians. He left the order ten years later and with a newly acquired Masters degree from the Péter Pázmány University he began to work as a grammar school teacher, ending up as the Principal of the Academy of Commerce. He was a diligent reader and just as diligent a writer. Three of his works, *A tragédia elmélete* (The Theory of Tragedy) (1871), *A komédia elmélete* (The Theory of Comedy) (1872) and *Aestétikai dogozatok* (Aesthetic Studies) (1873) are reminiscent of the youthful works of Brandes, which is not surprising, since he was a contemporary of Brandes and had evidently been grappling with the same aesthetic problems. Névy conscientiously kept up with the Western European specialist literature, especially the works written in German. Two things were to preoccupy him throughout his life: teaching and literature.

On 10 October 1872, Névy took over the post of editor of the periodical *Az Országos Középtanodai Tanáregylet Közlönye* (Bulletin of the Secondary

School Teachers' Association). Right from his first contribution, the newly elected editor set a tone that left the readers in no doubt at all that the periodical had undergone a profound change. Born pedagogue that he was, he directed some challenging questions at his readers:

> Do we want *Közlöny* to be a scholarly journal, whose most exalted task, in addition to dealing with pedagogical questions, should be that of exerting influence on the friends and practicioners of scholarship? Do we want *Közlöny* to disseminate and pass on to others all viable ideas and all creative thoughts in the fields of learning?[25]

The implied answer must have been "yes", since Névy went on to air his plans for the literary columns of the magazine, which from now on would be divided into a Hungarian and a foreign section. "I would like to give prominence to foreign literature",[26] he writes. "This section will deal exclusively with book reviews, the importance of which should go without saying, nor should it be necessary to state that by book reviews I mean something more than a superficial notice cobbled together from the preface and the table of contents of the book in question."[27]

László Névy - Brandes' first Hungarian disciple. As early as 1873, soon after the publication of Emigrant Literature *in German, he wrote a series of articles about the book and quoted several extracts in Hungarian.*

In the next issue of *Közlöny*, the promised new column started off with a review of Georg Brandes' *Hauptströmungen des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts.* The review appeared as a detailed, five-page introductory article. The contents can be divided into three sections, the first taking Brandes' biography as its point of departure, the second describing the literary situation in Denmark, as seen by Brandes, and the third giving a brief overview of the contents of *Emigrantlitteraturen* (Emigrant Literature). Even this small sketch reveals that Névy was aiming at something more than an ordinary book review. This is how he begins:

> We could hardly have chosen a more thought-provoking book with which to inaugurate our new section than the present one. The cultured nations of Europe have become acquainted with the name of this young Danish scholar and there is general enthusiasm and recognition for this work, which in a national context is seen to inaugurate a new age, while from a literary and cultural perspective it can rightly claim its place among the most distinguished works of its kind.[28]

After this introduction, Névy moves on to Brandes' biography. Displaying an astonishing knowledge of detail, he relates how Carsten Hauch, the Danish Professor of Aesthetics, made a written statement on his deathbed, nominating Brandes as his successor for the Chair at the University of Copenhagen. We also learn about Brandes' disappointment and bitterness when he was not, after all, given that position. There is a brief description of the overwhelming success of the introductory lectures and of the subsequent attacks from the press. The reader shares Névy's rage at the aggressiveness that Danish public opinion showed towards this "brilliant scholar",[29] who ended up having to go abroad in order to find peaceful working conditions. Here we see the outlines of later biographical portraits of Brandes. The picture is rounded off with the following character sketch:

> Brandes is the man of free ideas, of free thought and the man of the future; he is a rationalist and a realist in the sense that *he also fights under the banners of the last century* [my emphasis - ZBA]; his motto is: freedom for research in the sciences and freedom for human expression in poetry![30]

Névy thus places Brandes in a revolutionary context. He senses the fighting spirit in *Emigrant Literature* and sees in the person of the Danish

literary critic a representative of true, classical liberalism. In view of the fact that the review was written six years after the treaty with Austria, his comment on "the banners of the last century" must refer to the Hungarian Revolution. When he mentions Brandes' crushing verdict on the sluggishness that afflicts the political and cultural scene in Denmark, this can also be taken as an indirect reference to the Hungarian situation. "The Byzantine conditions"[31] in Brandes' native country prevailed in Névy's, too. Danish literature is still characterized by its distance from reality, its excessive idealism and its lack of originality. The same could be said of the populist-nationalistic, derivative poetry of Hungary. Both countries had fallen behind the rest of Europe. In general, foreign materials were often given a twist that rendered them easily understandable in a Hungarian context. The readers had an ear that was finely tuned to catch the subtle allusions of the author.

Névy admits that it is no easy task to write about Brandes' book. "If I were to draw attention to everything that is educational and positive in this work, the entire book would have to be translated,"[32] he concludes. Since this could not be done in a hurry, Névy had to make do with quoting central passages that he himself had translated. Brandes could now be read in Hungarian for the first time. The elegant account of the historical progress of literature, which has the form and the feel of drama, and the six groups of literature - the six acts of this great drama - that Brandes planned to deal with in *Main Currents in 19th Century Literature* were reproduced in their entirety, and the fundamental, opposing concepts of the work: progress and reaction, were explained in Brandes' own words. The general lines that are drawn in the *Introduction* were laid out for Hungarian readers.

It is clear from Névy's article that his main aim was to introduce the author and his work rather than to offer a critical evaluation. Névy primarily wanted to reveal the essence of the work and for that reason he concentrated on the opening pages and on the final chapter. His narrow concentration on the text can hardly be attributed to uncertainty about the subject matter, for with his educational background he was comfortably familiar with the contemporary traditions of literary criticism. He had read Julian Schmidt, Gervinus and, in particular, Hermann Hettner, who was very popular in Hungary. Névy rightly points out the connection between the German literary scholar and Brandes, but at the same time he comments that "while he [Hettner] paints with an epic breadth, the work of Brandes bears the hallmarks of a drama."[33] Furthermore, Névy draws attention to the Dane's exceptional talent for writing simply and clearly. This work has everything - he says generously - its author is not only very able, he also has his own,

independent views and he welcomes free thought:

> In his judgements Brandes always strives to be factual. But his strong dislike of all kinds of orthodoxy often places sharp words in his mouth. It was in connection with descriptions of the Romantics, in particular, that he made some remarks which led to bitter attacks and personal hatred from his fellow countrymen.[34]

With these words, a new work by a hitherto unknown author was introduced into Hungary. What still needs answering, however, is the unavoidable question of what parts of the article were Névy's own work and what parts of it might have originated elsewhere. There are several good reasons for regarding Adolf Strodtmann (1829-97), Brandes' German translator, as the original source. Strodtmann knew Brandes at close quarters[35] and was fascinated by the young, Hegelian Dane. In his person, Strodtmann was reminded of his own radical past. For he himself had belonged to the *Vormärz* movement; he had even taken part in the 1848 Revolution, during which he had been wounded, and had then had an enforced stay in Denmark, where he learnt Danish.[36]

Strodtmann's preface to his translation of *Emigrant Literature*, and his own book, *Das geistige Leben in Dänemark* (1873), must have been Névy's primary sources of information. The book is rather tendentious and glorifies Brandes. In Denmark, this hagiographic account did him more harm than good, but Névy had a different frame of reference. In Strodtmann's book he encountered a literary activist who was campaigning against a reactionary, provincial, bigoted, self-sufficient society. And this image could easily be identified with the situation of middle class intellectuals in Hungary.

That Névy got hold of Strodtmann's book soon after it was published can be accounted for by the fact that he had already by that time read Brandes' *Emigrant Literature* and was now eager to learn more about its author and about Danish conditions in general. *Das geistige Leben in Dänemark* not only received its literary memorial in Névy's article, it was also reviewed in *Figyelő* (The Observer), one of the most remarkable periodicals of the age, on which Névy was employed as a literary journalist.

The whole group of authors attached to *Figyelő* wanted to keep a watchful eye on European currents, "the leading ideas that were swamping the world", to use their own expression. This overall programme was faithfully adopted by the periodical. Generally speaking, the liberal, positivist approach was more pronounced here than in any other organ of that time. *Figyelő* was launched and on 1 January 1871 it managed to keep going for six years; a

long time for a specialist magazine. The areas that *Figyelő* dealt with embraced literature, art and literary criticism. Its contributors were recruited from among the enlightened intellectuals of the middle class and the gentry. They were all well-versed in the democratic systems of France and England, and most had spent long periods at foreign universities, where they acquired a knowledge of the new scientific and positivist methods.

One of the periodical's greatest 'favourites' was Georg Brandes. The fact that he was included in its sphere of interest at a time when he had not yet acquired European fame is testimony to *Figyelő*'s alertness - according to the literary historian Béla G. Németh, the leading scholar of Hungarian positivism. In 1873 alone, *Figyelő* published four articles on Brandes' *Emigrant Literature*. The author of these detailed accounts was of course László Névy. *Figyelő* had an eager, interested public, whose background was just as varied as its social composition, but it was united on one thing, namely its enthusiasm for the new ideas which in the 1870s involved a commitment to Europe. Névy suspected quite rightly that the readership of *Figyelő* was much broader (also socially) than that of his own *Közlöny*, and he succeeded in placing a series of articles about *Emigrant Literature* in this periodical. In this way, Brandes was introduced to two different circles of readers in Hungary at the same time. Névy's efforts thus marked an effective prelude to the history of Brandes' reception in Hungary.

It says much for the editorial board's high opinion of Brandes' *Emigrant Literature* that they allowed an extended version of the *Közlöny* article to be published in *Figyelő*. There were four articles in all, three of which bore Névy's signature, while the first merely referred to its source, *Bulletin of the Secondary School Teachers' Association*. These articles contain a representative selection of extracts from Brandes' book. The reader is given a detailed account that is based almost exclusively on long quotations from the book, but no clear distinction is made between Névy's own words and those of Brandes in translation.

In his introduction Névy stresses the importance of Rousseau to the 19th century. He shows how Rousseau's *La nouvelle Héloïse* forms the point of departure, how "this work gives rise to Werther in Germany", and how "the same thoughts and feelings stream back into France, where the work is called René".[37] These are the works that are considered in the three detailed articles. Névy's treatment of *Emigrant Literature* is thus not complete, but he succeeds in showing the lines of development from Rousseau to Chateaubriand.

Taking his starting-point in selected passages from Brandes' book, Névy demonstrates to the readers of *Figyelő* the modern traits present in *La*

nouvelle Héloïse: passion, the idea of democracy and the love of nature. Rousseau's *belle âme* reappeared in German literature as *die schöne Seele* in the shape of Werther. In *Werther* it is no longer, as in *La nouvelle Héloïse*, virtue and deistic piety that have to conquer natural instincts and passion; this work shows the fatalism of passion. A terrible discrepancy is experienced between the laws of passion and the laws of society. "Can there be a fault somewhere in the great machinery of life, so that everything is coming out of joint?"[38] asks Névy, using the words of Brandes. The French Revolution attempted to put right what was wrong with the world. But to René, this revolution, which Werther had earlier prepared for, is in the past. The poetry of annunciation gives way to the poetry of disappointment. Werther was unhappy, but René is melancholy and powerless. His spleen and *ennui* are neither personal nor national, but part of a European epidemic. As one of the chosen ones, René is called upon to act and take on the role of leader, but he is unable to make decisions or carry out a plan. He suffers from "the sickness of the century", now devoured by radiant *joie de vivre*, now by a nihilistic urge towards self-destruction.

It must be admitted that, fundamentally, these articles seem to be a cleverly constructed collection of quotations, but by the very virtue of the fact that they appear in this guise, they give the reader a foretaste of Brandes' book. Furthermore, Névy's introduction implicitly puts into practice some of the critical ideas that Brandes thought important; namely, to place literary examples within a historical development, to demonstrate a lively relationship between the national literatures of Europe, to explain the types described and their behaviour in terms of the prevailing historical conditions and to give critical consideration to the relationship between the individual and society. This was the programme that the critics who were attached to *Figyelő* tried to live up to.

What the literary journalists of the periodical were most concerned with was the relationship between the national literature and world literature. Sándor Endrődi (1850-1920) viewed with great sadness his country's literature, which with a few, hardly sensational exceptions was at the derivative stage. Popular nationalistic poetry had reached its zenith with Petőfi and János Arany (1817-82) and the continued cultivation of patriotic poetry merely served to reinforce Hungary's isolation from the rest of Europe. Provincialism and a claustrophobic nationalism stamped its almost indelible mark on the literature. Endrődi concludes:

> Times have changed, and we must break out of the isolation that we have lived in until now. We must follow the spirit of the age,

> which will draw the nations closer together and which will turn art into the common property of all humanity.[39]

To *Figyelő*, the only possible way towards this goal was via 'cosmopolitanism'. For it was only by moving in this direction that Hungarian literature would be able to become an organic part of world literature. In the context of *Figyelő*, the word 'cosmopolitanism', which had acquired negative connotations over the years, represented the general, the universal as distinct from the particular. There was talk of a "spiritual communism"[40] that would soon prevail, for it would break down national, religious and geographical boundaries in art. And Endrődi added that the Hungarian nation would be forced to go along with the others,

> especially now, when everything is seething and breaking up and when free thought, liberated from its chains, bellows the great words of progress at the top of its voice.[41]

This is how the left-wing, Hegelian belief in progress was mediated to the readers. Inspired by *Junges Deutschland*, Heine and Börne, the *Figyelő* circle belonged to Brandes' generation, not only in terms of age but also ideologically.

Another important aspect of literary theory of interest to the *Figyelő* group of critics was the problem of realism. The question of harmony and discord and the portrayal of beauty and ugliness were considered in a series of articles. Central to these studies were demands for a true portrayal of reality and for a faithful representation of the surrounding world. In practice, however, these demands came into conflict with the idealising aesthetic of poetical realism, which most people still clung to. Literature in Hungary was caught in a transitional stage between classical-romantic aesthetics and the school of realistic naturalism. According to Endrődi, the poet's first and most important duty is to exert influence; like a mirror, the work must reflect real life, either generally or by highlighting its most prominent characteristics.[42] In other words, the poet must present the individual, the generally human and the national as well as the universal. The *Figyelő* group could have read all this in Brandes, but by that time the periodical had closed down. For as long as *Figyelő* was in publication, however, they followed the trail blazed by Brandes. This always happened via German mediation.

From October 1872 Brandes began paying regular visits to Berlin, where he kept abreast of the work of his translator, Adolf Strodtmann, first on *Emigrant Literature*, then on *The Romantic School in Germany* (1873) and

The Reaction in France (1874). In early July 1874, Brandes met Julius Rodenberg, the editor of the periodical *Deutsche Rundschau* in Strodtmann's home. The young Dane was not completely unknown to Rodenberg, as appears from a letter that he sent to his friend, the writer Paul Heyse, who arranged the contact between the editor of *Deutsche Rundschau* and Brandes. Here Rodenberg writes that he is an "aufrichtiger Verehrer"[43] of Brandes and that he had just seen to it that a comprehensive review of *Main Currents* would appear in the first issue of his new periodical. Soon after the publication of the introductory issue of *Deutsche Rundschau*, a detailed account of its various articles appeared in *Figyelő*, including a review of *Emigrant Literature*. The second issue of the German periodical featured Brandes' "meisterhafte Studie über Lassalle".[44] This issue was not reviewed separately, but we know that *Deutsche Rundschau* had a sizeable readership in Hungary.[45]

The Danish critic had finally made a name for himself in Hungary. He was regarded as a literary historian who worked with the comparative method, according to which the literature of each period is explained in terms of the historical reality of that period, and national cultural developments are projected against the backcloth of the European history of ideas. This became the blueprint for Aladár György (1844-1906), one of *Figyelő*'s most gifted literary scholars. He regarded both the history of ideas and comparative literary history as media via which the scholar could describe the universal, i.e. the cosmopolitan; in other words, the universal rather than the specifically national. Indigenous developments in individual nations lay outside his field of interest, and he was of the opinion that it is only by means of comparison that characteristic traits can be determined.

In the 1870s, *Figyelő* was the organ in which original, idealistic liberalism found its clearest expression. It is not difficult to understand why those involved with the periodical tried to find inspiration and fellow-comrades for this ideology. They presented original writings, extracts and summaries of works that passed the new European currents on to Hungarian readers. They wanted to raise Hungarian literature and literary criticism to a European level, since they were dissatisfied with intellectual developments at home. Although this dissatisfaction was not articulated as audaciously or as boldly as it was by Brandes in 1871, the *Figyelő* group's anxieties about the state of things were no less serious. In what direction are we moving - asked the periodical's leading critic, Endrődi - forwards or backwards? His view of the literary offerings of his age was a pessimistic one. *Figyelő* saw it as its duty to bring new impulses into this intellectual stagnation.

Although it would take us too far to compare social and cultural

developments in Denmark and Hungary, one might tentatively suggest that there were several points of resemblance in the situations of the two countries in the late 1860s and the early 1870s. Just as Hungary had to learn to live with the reality of the Compromise, i.e. with the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, Denmark had to finally recognize that Schleswig-Holstein had been lost. From a political as well as from a literary point of view, both countries were "stupefied and broken".[46] *Emigrant Literature* sent into this heavy atmosphere fresh breezes that reached Hungary via Germany. In Denmark, this change in the weather heralded a literary breakthrough, and in Hungary we see a number of young authors gather enough strength to put their theoretical liberalism into practice. One way to do this was to keep up with the new currents and pass them on to Hungarian readers. The review of *Emigrant Literature* was an excellent example of this kind of practical application. The Hungarian reader was confronted with a new, active way of using literary criticism. Viewed in this light, László Névy's articles on Brandes were a good initiative.

The Periodical *Élet* and Georg Brandes

At the beginning of November 1890, Georg Brandes unexpectedly received a letter from a Hungarian writer, József Diner-Dénes (1857-1937), who was unknown to him at the time. But from the detailed letter he sent, it appears that he was perfectly aware of who Brandes was and what he stood for. Without hesitation, he wrote:

> Hochverehrter Herr Professor!
>
> Noch hat sich das junge Ungarn nicht vernehmen lassen in dem Concerte der 'Moderne'. Aber wir beginnen wach zu werden, und unser Erstes ist, dass wir eine Zeitschrift gründen als Tummelplatz für das junge Ungarn ... Aber noch sind wir hier schwach, und bedürfen der Stützen. Und da ist es wohl selbverständlich, dass wir uns an Sie hochverehrter Herr wenden, an den Grossmeister der modernen literarischen Kritik, an den bewährten Streiter und Förderer aller modernen Ideen.[47]

Occurrences of this kind were not unusual. Brandes received reams of similar invitations and in most cases he accepted them, in spite of the heavy burden of work under which he constantly laboured. From far and near he was bombarded with requests, sometimes to send original contributions for

publication, sometimes to read and comment on new books and unpublished manuscripts of all kinds. In the 1890s, the Danish critic was at the height of his fame. Translations of his works appeared regularly in both Eastern and Western Europe. People tended to regard him as something of a 'literary institution': inspirer of and mentor for new talents, midwife for new literary movements and publiciser of national literature that had not, to date, made its mark.

There were several reasons why Diner-Dénes' letter caught the attention of Brandes. In the first place, the Hungarian author's request came from an as yet unestablished organ. The fact that the periodical was still in an embryonic state gave the letter a certain freshness and authenticity. Secondly, the outlined programme seemed to be serious and politically progressive. And thirdly, the letter reminded Brandes of a parallel situation. Five years previously, in 1885, he had been approached by another unknown author. This was the young Flemish poet, Pol de Mont (1857-1931), who wrote with great fire and enthusiasm of the upsurge of Flemish self-consciousness, of a linguistic and cultural revival in the north-eastern part of Belgium. Brandes was attracted by the ideological basis of the *jonge Vlaanderen* movement. As scholars have frequently pointed out, he had deep sympathy for the struggles of oppressed peoples to express their identity. In his view, every nation should have the opportunity to develop its own, particular aptitudes. It was these ideas that led him to immerse himself in the new Flemish literature, and these same ideas led him to take an interest in the planned periodical, which according to the editor was to be "an arena for young Hungary".[48]

József Diner-Dénes corresponded with Brandes and he persuaded the Danish critic to write for his new, radical periodical Élet. *This photo shows Diner-Dénes in his capacity as Deputy Foreign Minister in the Károlyi government in 1918.*

The name 'young Hungary' appears to be an allusion to the *junges Deutschland* movement, which had a kind of renaissance in 1890, when Brandes published the sixth and final volume of *Main Currents*. But 'young Hungary' was certainly not a delayed echo of the nationalist revival movements elsewhere in Europe. The creation of a modern society, a new, 'young' Hungary was the common aim of liberal intellectuals. It was from their ranks that the circle surrounding the new periodical were recruited.

The members of the editorial board were wholehearted supporters of bourgeois individualism, and their programme was "to secure more freedom for the individual and for all things individual".[49] It was also made clear that the periodical "would neither place itself at the service of any particular ideas nor follow any particular school".[50] Thus Diner-Dénes expounded in his letter to Brandes the close ideological relationship between the name of the periodical and its programme:

> Der Titel unserer Monatsschrift ist "Leben", und dieser Titel gibt auch unser Programm. Wir wollen das immer lebendige, sich verändernde, fortschreitende, undogmatische Leben wahrhaftig aber künstlerisch gefasst.[51]

This programmatic statement was in harmony with Brandes' own ideas in many respects. Diner-Dénes must have realized this since he managed to strike a note that Brandes was willing to listen to. The petition from the young Hungarian writer seemed to him to be a serious one; his letter, compared with others of the same kind, amounted to something more than simple editorial concerns. The recipient was given a sample of the thoughts of bourgeois intellectuals on the subject of Hungary's future. It revolved on certain notions that were ideologically connected to liberalism. To Diner-Dénes and his circle, Georg Brandes was a figure with whom they could identify: both as the writer of the much discussed and admired *Emigrant Literature* and as a literary activist who acted as mediator of European intellectual currents and gave a place of honour to free thought.

The Hungarian intellectuals apparently met Brandes in a 'horizon of expectations' which had several facets. This attitude on the part of the recipients illustrates the theory that a horizon of expectations can be composed of different layers. This phenomenon has often been noted by reception theorists, including Rien T. Segers, who writes:

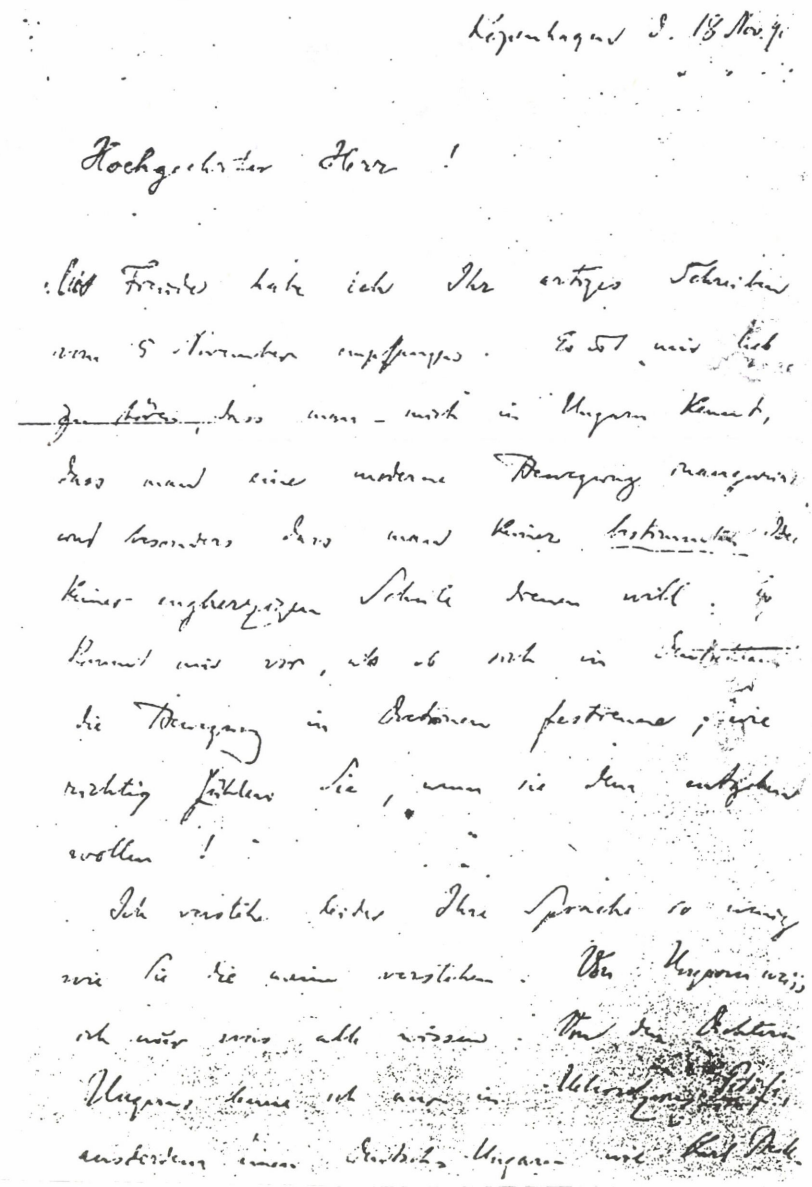
> First there is a set of expectations connected with a particular epoch which may be identified by the traditions and conventions

> prevalent at the time a new text appears. Second, a single (often early) text of an author may become the standard against which all the later texts of an author are measured. Third, an image of the author that represents one particular aspect of the author's creativity may become the standard for his reception as a whole.[52]

Diner-Dénes was able to perceive several dimensions in the Dane. To him, Brandes was not merely "Grossmeister der modernen literarischen Kritik", but also "bewährter Streiter und Förderer aller modernen Ideen".[53] He could hardly have chosen a better source of support for the fledgeling periodical. The expectations of this learned, well-informed Hungarian concerning Brandes almost inevitably led to an exchange of opinions by correspondence. The letter referred to above was to a large extent Diner-Dénes' manifesto, which was to be given the seal of approval by the authority, Brandes.

Diner-Dénes, who was 15 years younger than Brandes, did not feel any generation gap, intellectually speaking, between himself and the Danish scholar. He too was an out-and-out European. He had studied in Vienna, Dresden, Paris and Brussels, where he was active in a wide variety of fields. Art history, archaeology and philosophy were among his favourite subjects. He was very much at home in both Hungarian and Western European culture. From March 1890 he worked for Otto Brahm's periodical, *Freie Bühne für modernes Leben*, in which Brandes also published and had his work reviewed on several occasions. Brandes' name was mentioned with increasing frequency during the years Diner-Dénes spent in Western Europe. In Berlin, however, he began to follow Brandes more closely. As has already been indicated, Berlin played a special part in connection with the way in which Brandes was received in Hungary, due to the strong dislike of Hungarian liberals for Austrian mediation. It is tempting to assume that Diner-Dénes' goodwill towards Brandes was aroused even further by his work for *Freie Bühne für modernes Leben*.

After the publication of *Emigrant Literature* in 1872, at least one work by Brandes was published each year in a German translation. Between 1877 and 1883, Brandes lived in Berlin and delivered a number of essays to Rodenberg's periodical, *Deutsche Rundschau*. It was the work that Brandes did for this organ that was partly responsible for his success in the German literary market. Rodenberg's periodical was not only influential in his homeland, it also made its mark in a European context insofar as it resembled the famous *Revue des deux Mondes*, which Rodenberg had taken as his model. Brandes' essays on Mérimée (1880), Balzac, Flaubert (1881),



Letter from Georg Brandes to József Diner-Dénes, 18.11. 1890, in which he praises the programme of the periodical Élet.

the Goncourt brothers (1882) and Zola (1888), which prepared the way for French naturalism, appeared in *Deutsche Rundschau*; and Scandinavian writers, too, were introduced to a wider European circle thanks to articles on Tegnér (1878), Holberg (1888) and Oehlenschläger (1889). From a reception point of view, the fact that the above-mentioned articles were written in German was to be particularly significant, since many central European countries were thereby drawn into the circle of potential readers.

Diner-Dénes returned home from Berlin with the publishing experience he had acquired on *Freie Bühne für modernes Leben* and a wealth of progressive ideas. He found his country, though oppressed by internal conflicts, in the midst of a dramatic process of change that allowed the new intellectual middle class to make its political mark. The first radical groupings began to form and the Hungarian Social Democratic Party was founded. Diner-Dénes chose the right moment. He was aware of the openness of the age towards ideological pluralism. *Élet* became an important forum for the new radical and liberal ideas.

Élet continued the cultural and literary trends that had been pursued by *Figyelő* in the 1870s. The liberal contributions were still concerned with 'cosmopolitanism' and 'individualism'. It is natural to see *Figyelő* as a precursor, perhaps even as a precondition, for *Élet*. As the literary scholar Endre Kiss points out, the aims of both periodicals were virtually identical. Both sought to establish contacts with Western European intellectual currents, and both adopted a critical attitude towards official literature and the official view of art. It was the first step towards "relativising absolute normative values";[54] in other words, towards putting a question mark against the accepted laws of society that the individual had to submit to.

These views were put forward by Diner-Dénes and Brandes' speedy reply arrived on 18 November 1880:

> Hochgeehrter Herr! Mit Freude habe ich Ihr artiges Schreiben vom 5. November empfangen. Es ist mir lieb zu hören, dass man mich in Ungarn kennt, dass man eine moderne Bewegung inauguriert und besonders dass man keiner bestimmten Idee, keiner engherzigen Schule dienen will. Es kommt mir vor, als ob sich in Deutschland die Bewegung in Doctrinen festrenne; wie richtig fühlen Sie, wenn Sie dem entgehen wollen![55]

In view of the fact that most correspondence of this type confined itself to polite, impersonal discussion of such practical matters as the size of the article and the method of publication and payment, this letter to the editors

of *Élet* must be regarded as a clear sign of encouragement from Brandes. He promised to send a contribution for the first issue of the periodical.

In his letter of reply, Diner-Dénes immediately made it clear to Brandes that only an original, as yet unpublished manuscript could be used, for as he pointed out, "alles deutsch erscheinende ist bei uns bekannt". In Hungary, one can publish articles *simultaneously with* German language periodicals, but never *after* them. Should that happen, the editors would be branded as "Scheerenmänner".[56]

Brandes complied with the wishes of the editors and promised to write to his translator, Mrs Mathilde Prager in Vienna, to ask her to send two articles on Polish literature. He assured Diner-Dénes that these articles "weder deutsch erschienen sind noch deutsch erscheinen sollen, bevor sie magyarisch vorliegen".[57]

The Periodical *Élet* Makes its Appearance

Élet became one of the publications in which the battle for 'young Hungary' was fought most fiercely. The first issue was published in January 1891 under the direction of Diner-Dénes and Lajos Katona (1862-1910). Its editorial staff were a very mixed bunch who met regularly to discuss politics as well as art and literature. Their circle, which took its name from the periodical, was the young intellectuals' answer to official academic clubs such as *The Kisfaludy Society* or *The Petőfi Society*. It was a 'grassroots movement' which attracted the most talented people in Hungary: the poet János Vajda (1827-97), the literary historian Zsigmond Bodnár (1839-1907), the ethnographers Béla Vikár (1859-1945) and Lajos Katona, the writers Sándor Bródy (1863-1924), Béla Lázár (1869-1950), Dezső Szomory (1869-1944), and last but by no means least, József Diner-Dénes. A group of contemporary academics attached themselves to them. These men were members of the middle class and had an undogmatic approach to religion, despite differences of faith. Members of the *Élet* circle felt a sense of affinity that was based on their "identical outlook"[58] and on their conscious efforts to break down the old value systems, in a Nietzschean sense they wanted an "Umwerthung aller Werthe". Scandinavian literature attracted the group's particular attention. This interest was also reflected in the periodical's choice of texts; thus the first issues of *Élet* were dominated by Ibsen and Brandes.

Their enthusiasm for Ibsen found its first, lavish expression in April 1891. When the Norwegian dramatist was due to visit Vienna,[59] the *Élet* circle took the step of inviting him to Budapest. Both the great banquet and the programme for the visit were arranged by Diner-Dénes and his

colleagues. In an undated letter, Lajos Katona writes:

> In its own interest, *Élet* will arrange a banquet for Ibsen on Wednesday evening, to which we will invite all the important people who play a part in literary and artistic life, or are prominent in some other sphere of society and are presumably interested in our guest ... Count Albert Apponyi,[60] manager Géza Zichy,[61] Paulay,[62] and the leading members of the National Theatre, the Pulszkys (both the Younger and the Elder),[63] a number of Members of Parliament, all the newspaper editors; furthermore, famous writers and artists have already announced their intention to be present. The old Norwegian was extremely satisfied with the attention that was paid to him. Vikár met him at the railway station on our behalf and it is my impression that people in all social circles expected us to take care of all the arrangements. I think it would have been most unfortunate, had we not done so.[64]

The programme was carried out to everyone's satisfaction. Both the *Élet* circle and the periodical itself were thrown into prominence.

As well as concerning itself with literature and art, *Élet* also dealt with economic and social questions. From 1892 the magazine was deeply involved with the so-called ecclesiastical reforms,[65] which led to its latent anti-clericalism suddenly becoming explicit. It is hardly surprising that the opposition branded those associated with the periodical as "sworn enemies of the Christian, national society".[66] They included among their number radicals, materialists, cosmopolitans, freethinkers, the *avant-garde* and nihilists, as Károly Burián writes with a certain amount of malice in a polemic article.

Élet stood apart from other contemporary organs because of its radical-liberal tendency. As far as choice of subject matter was concerned, the editors displayed a fine, intuitive, historical sense. Its sense of time was, in fact, one of the greatest virtues of *Élet*. The final decade of the century was seen by those associated with the periodical as the great turning-point: the human race stood on the threshold of a new century and Hungary on the threshold of a new millenium in Europe, or rather on the border between Eastern and Western Europe. The periodical consciously took on the role of harsh critic of the nation and conjured up for the readers the negligence of the previous centuries that had prevented Hungarian culture from competing with Western European nations. In the article expounding his programme, the editor justified the foundation of the magazine by stressing the

importance of public debate and outlined the themes that would be pursued by *Élet*:

> [Public debate] this oppressed spirit will sooner or later shake off its torpor and turn its chains into arms. What we need is a literary movement that with true devotion will serve the ideal purpose of public debate and help counteract the effusive praise that the official press pours on the prevaling conditions - the stagnation. But a movement of this kind cannot have a lasting effect on the way society develops unless it is intimately connected with real *life*.[67]

The article paints a realistic picture of the prevailing conditions. The Hungarian nation has as yet no grounds for complacency, since developments have been slow compared with those in Western Europe. It is still difficult to convince foreign countries of Hungary's progress in the cultural sphere; to Western Europe, Hungary still seems to be a semi-primitive, exotic nation. The article touches on an ever recurring question: ought one to promote or restrain European influence on the "genuinely Hungarian"? The editor touched a sore point here that had already been aired twenty years earlier in *Figyelő*. In his article Diner-Dénes referred to Brandes and used the thoughts of the Danish critic in his argumentation:

> As *Brandes*, the famous literary historian, rightly says, in the life of the nations there is one thing that is higher than the romantic and sentimental guiding principles. Something that above all else guarantees the survival and development of that nation. It is the unceasing effort that individual peoples have to make in order to preserve their existence. These peoples have to demonstrate impressive intellectual and material progress coupled with *toil* that constantly improves both in quality and quantity, and thereby force their jealous or sympathetic competitors to allow them the right to exist.[68]

Élet supported this principle of work and managed to show Western Europe that people in Hungary were capable of reaching European standards without renouncing the specifically national. The periodical set itself the goal of communicating the new intellectual currents, the topical issues, that which was in the air. With its programme, *Élet* pledged itself to the service of "free development and national independence". Development and progress are the key words in the periodical's programme. But it is only in "the life-

giving air of freedom and on the basis of a fortified national self-consciousness" that it is possible to achieve progress. The ideology of liberalism upholds the idea of the nation state and the demand for political and cultural independence for all peoples. This was well-founded, considering the oppressed peoples of Eastern Europe suffering from Russian and Austro-Hungarian domination. To Brandes, the idea of nationhood was of central importance and he received a powerful reminder of this when he visited Poland towards the end of the 1880s. It was understandable that Brandes' *Impressions of Poland* aroused interest in Hungary.[69] The desire for identification was no doubt a factor that contributed to the popularity of the book. Similar thoughts of identification must have struck Brandes when he chose a text about "Poland's Romantic Literature" for publication in the newly-fledged *Élet*. Brandes' essay was placed immediately after the editor's introductory article; and it is not just the physical proximity that is striking, but also the thematic similarities.

Brandes' essay mentions three Polish poets - Mickiewicz, Slowacky and Krasinski - whose poetry has a common theme, the description of "sufferings that find an outlet in thoughts of revenge, and the description of sufferings that find an outlet in the quest for spiritual development and purification".[70] The first kind is the poetry of revenge, which is a natural consequence of oppression. "The underlying idea is always that whoever is persecuted by gods and men has the right to use any means at their disposal, and that the highest law is the salvation of the native country ... Against foreign foes, hypocrisy and treachery are justifiable weapons."[71] In the poetry of Krasinski, Brandes discovers a different approach to the problem: one should not fight against one's enemy, but conquer him by means of a "pure and spiritual superiority".[72] In Hungary, 23 years after the Compromise, these passages could still be interpreted in a national-historical context.

> There are two main doctrines in the battle of life. One is earthly, the other spiritual, the first is concerned with immediate, the other with long-term consequences of an action. According to the first: since life is full of horrors, render your enemy harmless by destroying him. Any means to that end are good. According to the other: since life is full of horrors, diminish their number by repaying hatred with love.[73]

These are the two doctrines that permeate Poland's Romantic literature. But Brandes adds that there is a third doctrine: "It does not advocate destruction, nor love of one's enemy, but that one should labour harder and

better than he. The future does not belong to either revengers or apostles, but to those who work with genius."[74]

The above quotations show that the author of the introductory article was inspired by Brandes. It was his 'third doctrine' that became the motto of *Élet*. The task that the periodical had set itself was hard labour that should communicate to foreign countries the spirit of the Hungarian people and their will to keep up with European developments. In a purely pragmatic way, the periodical's literary journalists took Brandes' teaching to heart. They had no doubts at all that it was Brandes who worked with genius.

Young Hungary

On 12 December 1890, Diner-Dénes wrote again to Brandes and expressed his delight that the Danish literary critic agreed with him that *Élet* should be kept free of all "Schulideen".[75] He had already told him this in his first letter: "Wir stellen uns aber weder in den Dienst irgend einer bestimmten Idee noch kämpfen wir für eine bestimmte Schule."[76] This categorical statement says something about the fundamental nature of *Élet* that manifested itself in "a special cultivation of philosophical, idealist individualism".[77]

As was indicated above, in the 1870s every effort had to be made to safeguard the existence of "the free, independent Hungarian nation". This was the goal that *Figyelő* took up the cudgels for. In the 1890s, however, people were thinking along different lines, which Diner-Dénes describes as follows: "Vor allem wollen wir dem Individuum, allem Individuellen freiesten Spielraum gewähren."[78]

A more subtle definition states that what young Hungary needs are *men of action* who will mercilessly declare war on "the sanctity of custom". These words leave the reader in no doubt at all about the thoughts of this particular young critic on the nature and possibilities of individualism. Like Brandes, Diner-Dénes believes in the forces, the drive and the desire for independence inherent in human nature. Individuality is identical with development, according to one of the maxims in the article outlining *Élet*'s programme, where individualism is seen as a necessary precondition for change and progress in society.

What is striking is that this strong emphasis on the free development of the individual and the promised struggle for a modern Hungary, free from the "sacred inviolability of the old habits", occurred just around the time that Brandes' long essay on Nietzsche was published in *Deutsche Rundschau*. It appears from the correspondence between Diner-Dénes and Brandes that the

Hungarian quickly got hold of Brandes' article on Nietzsche and studied it with an expert eye. Nor did it fail to provoke a reaction; thus he wrote to the Danish critic: "Zugleich werde ich mir erlauben Ihnen eine im Sommer von mir geschriebene Studie über Nietzsche mitzusenden. Es scheint mir als ob *unsere Meinungen über Nietzsche etwas different wären* [my emphasis - ZBA], und deshalb würde es mich freuen, wenn Sie es kennen würden."[79]

Like Brandes, Diner-Dénes was profoundly interested in Nietzsche. The above-mentioned study appeared in the German periodical *Moderne Dichtung*. In this, he paints a psychological portrait of the poet-philosopher and explains that if one wishes to understand Nietzsche, "muss man ihn psychologisch schaffen, so wie er selbst seine Probleme fasst".[80] With a confident pen and a certain empathy, Diner-Dénes analyses the controversial views put forward in the works and the categorical pronouncements on morality, and concludes by stating that Nietzsche "übersieht und durchsieht seinen Feind, erkennt als dessen Tiefstes und Grösstes, als den eigentlich zu besiegenden Feind: die Moral[81] ... Sei es, dass man sie blos landläufig - als Sitte - fasst, oder evolutionistisch - als Sittlichkeit der Sitte. Stets ist sie etwas Stagnierendes."[82] His conclusion has certain similarities with Brandes' account. Both Brandes and Diner-Dénes dislike the coercion to which the individual must constantly give way in society. And they look with suspicion and anxiety at the consequences of this continual standardization that must necessarily lead to vulgarization and stagnation in the intellectual sphere. Unlike Brandes, however, Diner-Dénes warns against the possible misinterpretations that Nietzsche's powerful lyrical language can lead the reader into. He can be dangerous, warns Diner-Dénes, "wenn er hinabgezogen wird aus den ewigstürmischen und deshalb reinen Regionen der Höhe, in die stagnirenden Schichten der grossen Menge, wenn seine fortwährende Bewegung, sein Angreifen und Vertheidigen verwandelt wird in heilige Starre, in Sitte und Gesetz."[83]

What seems remarkable is that Diner-Dénes adopts different approaches and highlights different aspects in his interpretation of Nietzsche, when addressing the German public and when writing for his fellow countrymen. It is not surprising that to the Hungarian public he presents those ideas in Nietzsche's 'gospel' that are most appropriate, ideologically speaking, to reflect the 'image' of the new periodical. The courageous discussions about "re-evaluation of all values" that appeared in the columns of the first issues of *Élet* were regarded as just as provocative, or even shocking, as when Brandes gave his first lectures on Nietzsche in Copenhagen. Both critics had a clear goal with their interpretations of Nietzsche: using Nietzsche's ideas as the heavy artillery, they attacked the too easily attainable ideals and self-

satisfied mediocrity. Both wanted to breathe new life into the stagnant intellectual climate of their respective countries. Diner-Dénes states categorically:

> Ja, sagt er [Nietzsche], zu Allem was aufsteigendes Leben ist und Leben schafft. Nein - zu Allem was niedersteigendes Leben ist und Leben vernichtet. Darum sagt er Nein - zu aller Moral.[84]

Here "moral" alludes to dogmatic, traditional thinking, while life - "das aufsteigende Leben" - belongs to young Hungary. (Cf. the name of the periodical.)

Diner-Dénes' conviction that the accepted values, the doctrinaire systems, should be rejected runs like a red thread through his own critical writings on art and literature. With great openness he confides in Brandes:

> Ich leugne nicht für meine Person ziemlich scharf ausgeprägte Sym- und Antipathien zu besitzen, und es ist nur selbstverständlich, dass damit eine gewisse Unduldsamkeit Hand in Hand geht. Doch weiss ich dieselbe auf meinen Geschmack zu beschränken, da ich ja weiss, dass mein Sondergeschmack durchaus nur impressionistischen und *nicht doktrinären Ursprunges ist.*[85] [My emphasis - ZBA]

To which he adds quite unambiguously, "wie überall auch in der Litteratur nur das individuelle Können von Werth ist."[86] The fear of conformity is just as central an element in Diner-Dénes' view of culture as it is in that of Brandes. Conformity seems to constitute a threat to the independent development of individuals. Diner-Dénes thought that German criticism was characterized by doctrinairism, by a "Superklugheit"[87] that rendered this criticism "impotent".[88] This statement is an attack on "philistine upbringing", which according to Nietzsche's florid description resembles a "morass, in which all tiredness gets stuck and in whose poisonous mists all efforts wither away".[89] In Brandes' version one can almost smell the stale reaction that has enveloped religion, morality, literature, marriage, family life and public life.

By and large, Diner-Dénes' conclusions are an echo of classical liberalism's view of freedom, but he has gleaned many opinions from Brandes, especially from the works mentioned above. The intellectual bond between the Hungarian and the Danish literary critic is seen most clearly in Diner-Dénes' essay collection from 1896. A number of portraits are

presented here, selected in accordance with the author's sympathies and criteria for artistic evaluation. This gallery includes Zola, Anatole France, Moleschott, Maupassant, Nietzsche, Mór Jókai and Georg Brandes. The introductory essay, "Vergangenheit und Zukunft" (which lends its name to the whole collection), is a very personal, passionately written piece of prose. The reader receives an authentic impression of the ideological framework within which a Western-oriented, Hungarian radical moved.

Diner-Dénes openly relates his gradual disillusionment with the idea of evolution. He who in his youth openly acknowledged himself to be a "believing evolutionist",[90] who swore by the teachings of Darwin, Haeckel and Spencer, now had to admit that evolutionism had become a faded, sterile system, "dass jeder *gentleman* ihn beruhigt in sein *home* einlassen kann",[91] as he writes with caustic irony. He sees the triteness of the ideals. What was revolutionary and dangerous has disappeared. There has been a halt to development, evolutionism has made everyone equally happy or equally sad: "Die Schwachen und die Starken, die Armen und die Reichen, die Unterdrückten und die Unterdrücker."[92] One hears the same, regretful undertone in him as in Brandes, who passionately warned against the tendency that "all enthusiasm for progress has the word *omnibus* (for everyone!) as its watchword".[93] And if we move on to the end of the essay, "The Great Individual, the Source of Culture", where Brandes shows what "the free, peculiar development of the personality means for the well-being of the individual and of the whole community",[94] we begin to understand how close the views of Diner-Dénes are to those expressed in Brandes' famous piece. In his introductory essay, the Hungarian critic writes:

> Und da taucht ein Verdacht in mir auf ... Es ist eine jener gefährlichen Verdachtsarten, die man eigentlich verborgen halten und nähren sollte, bis sie das Licht der Öffentlichkeit vertragen, bis sie gross, stark und brutal werden. Dann erst sollte man sie hinausschleudern in die Menge, zwischen die grosse Heerde, als Verkünder eines neuen Tages, als Abschliesser der Zukunft. Aber der Verdacht plagt mich - ich bin ja noch ein Zögling der alten altruistischen Moral ... ich bin ja selbst in die Individualität blos moralisch verliebt ... ich muss den Verdacht los werden.[95]

When Diner-Dénes explains at the beginning of his essay "Vergangenheit und Zukunft" that he regards himself as a 'radical' who condemns conformity and mediocrity, he clearly wants to be seen as an 'aristocratic radical'. This expression, with the emphasis on 'radical', which Brandes used of Nietzsche

in 1887,[96] made a deep impression on the Hungarian.

Diner-Dénes' Essay on Georg Brandes

In 1891, after the publication of the first issue of *Élet*, which the editor proudly sent to Copenhagen, Diner-Dénes wrote to Brandes again:

> Nun komme ich wieder mit einer Bitte. Wir sind von verschiedenen Seiten darum angegangen worden, doch gleich in Einem der ersten Hefte unserer Zeitschrift eine Studie über "Georg Brandes" zu bringen, und da ich gerade unter der bedeutenden Impression des 6-sten Bandes Ihrer Hauptströmungen stehe, habe ich diese angenehme Aufgabe mit wirklichem Vergnügen übernommen.[97]

The letter was really a request for biographical material that could be used in the aforementioned study. He wanted 'facts', "Daten über ... Milieu, Vererbung, Anpassung".[98] Although Brandes did not take long to send the required information, the article did not appear until 1896. Here Diner-Dénes presents a subtle portrait of the famous Danish critic.

In an original way, he highlights Brandes' ability to divest himself of the straitjacket of the literary critic and create art in the field of criticism. He is sensitive to the linguistic and formal innovations in Brandes' critical practice. He prefers to regard the books on Lassalle and Kierkegaard as novels. "Wenn das Wort nicht so hässlich klingen würde - möchte ich sie 'Kritikromane' nennen,"[99] he writes and adds admiringly that few works can compare with the works of Brandes for their sensitive psychological portraits and realistic presentation. His instinctive search for the human being behind the work and his confident presentation, which reveals the actual personality of the author as well as what is artistically unique, have not been surpassed.

Diner-Dénes' study contains a large, autobiographical section, which Brandes had earlier sent to Hungary at the request of the editor of *Élet*. He wrote apologetically: "Ich fühlte mich zu schwach das Porträt 'Georg Brandes' ganz aus Eigenem heraus zu zeichnen, so nahm ich denn die Hülfe des Meisters selbst in Anspruch."[100] But the internal and external points of view in this essay supplement each other very well. In his many-sided analysis, Diner-Dénes does not forget to mention Brandes' support for the liberation of women. And in connection with his discussion of Brandes' interpretation of Nietzsche, he pounces on "die glückliche Bezeichnung: Radikalaristokrat",[101] which the German philosopher, too, had found very

pertinent. Diner-Dénes draws far-reaching conclusions:

> Allein Brandes ist noch lange, lange keine abgethane Station auf dem Wege der modernen Kulturmission. Wenn diese blanke Streitaxt einmal stumpf werden sollte, wird wohl noch manchen jungen Skandinavier, der heute auf dem freigemachten Wege herumtummelt, das wuchernde Gestrüpp und Kleinholz des nordischen Philisterthumes umklammern und zu Falle bringen.[102]

Brandes' conviction and commitment was an example to the new generation of writers whom he, and he alone, had inspired and helped on their way. In a letter to Paul Heyse, he himself writes: "This new literature is a creation of my life, my work, my battles and my love ... merciful nature has granted me the very rare gift of being able to take a great initiative, and because of this I have put new life into Scandinavian literature."[103]

The essay on Brandes illustrates better than anything else the great insight of József Diner-Dénes as a recipient. It is a serious contribution that marked an important stage in the history of Brandes' reception. For it shows how Brandes indirectly came to exert an influence on Hungarian literary criticism in the early 1890s. The emphasis on individual traits and the attempt to liberate criticism from rigid philological scrutiny formed the new path that the group of critics around Diner-Dénes started to follow.

Notes to Chapter 2:

1 Henri Nathansen, *Georg Brandes. Et Portræt*, Copenhagen 1929, p. 21.

2 *Ibid.*

3 See e.g. Bertil Nolin, *Den gode européen: Studier i Georg Brandes' idéutveckling 1871-1893*, Stockholm 1965. Helmut Grasshoff, "Georg Brandes über die russische und polnische Literatur"; Monica Partridge, "The activist critic and some Russian activists"; Zenon Ciesielski, "Brandes and Poland", *The Activist Critic, Orbis Litteratum*, Supplement no. 5. Copenhagen 1980.

4 Georg Brandes, *Levned* (Life), Copenhagen 1980.

5 See Jørgen Knudsen, *Georg Brandes, Frigørelsens vej. 1842- 1877*, Copenhagen 1982, p. 401.

6 Nils Åke Nilsson, "Us and Them. Virginia Woolf and Russian Literature", *We and They. National Identity as a Theme in Slavic Cultures*, Copenhagen University's Slaviske Studier 11, Copenhagen 1984, p. 215.

7 See Lene Tybjærg Schacke, "The ugly European? Georg Brandes as seen by the St. Petersburg Press", *We and They*, *op.cit.*, p. 120.

8 Zsuzsanna Bjørn Andersen, *Georg Brandes et la Belgique*, Brussels 1990, pp. 49-68.

9 Georg Brandes, *Levned*, *op.cit.* 1, p. 106.

10 Georg Brandes, *Samlede Skrifter* (Collected Works) (henceforth *SS*), 10, Copenhagen 1902, pp. 84-85.

11 *Budapesti Napló* (Budapest Daily Newspaper), 30.3. 1900, p. 8 (Vilmos Huszár).

12 Georg Brandes to Sándor Fischer, 15.10. 1888, MTA.

13 Sándor Fischer, *Petőfi's Leben und Werke*, Leipzig 1889.

14 Georg Brandes to Sándor Fischer, *op.cit.*

15 In Hungarian 'kiegyezés', in German 'Ausgleich', it became law by parliamentary decree under Section XII in 1867.

16 The so-called 'common concerns', in Hungarian 'közös ügy'.

17 See Péter Hanák's account in *Magyarország a monarchiában* (Hungary in the Monarchy), Budapest 1975, pp. 159-221.

18 Péter Hanák, *op.cit.*, p. 350.

19 Dominicus Kosáry, *Ungerns historia*, Stockholm 1944, p. 203.

20 See Péter Hanák, *op.cit.*, p. 370; Béla G. Németh, *A magyar irodalomkritikai gondolkodás a pozitivizmus korában* (Literary Critical Thought in Hungary in the Age of Positivism), Budapest 1981, p. 48; Antal Szerb, *Magyar irodalomtörténet* (Hungarian Literary History) (1934), Budapest 1958, p. 456.

21 Béla G. Németh, *op.cit.*, p. 31.

22 Endre Kiss, *A világnézet kora* (The Epoch of the World-Wide Outlook), Budapest 1982, p. 10.

23 *The Tatler*, 12.4. 1709, p. 1.

24 Georg Brandes, *Levned*, *op.cit.*, 2, p. 78.

25 László Névy, "Néhány szó a 'Közlöny' érdekében" (A Few Words in Favour of 'Communications'), *Az Orgszágos Középtanodai Tanáregylet Közlönye*, 1872-73, 6, 2, p. 58.

26 *Ibid.*, p. 59.

27 *Ibid.*, p. 60.

28 László Névy, "Külföldi irodalom" (Foreign Literature), *Az Országos Középtanodai Tanáregylet Közlönye*, 1873, 6, 3, p. 125.

29 *Ibid.*

30 *Ibid.*, p. 136.

31 *Ibid.*

32 *Ibid.*, p. 137.

33 *Ibid.*, p. 136.

34 *Ibid.*, p. 139.

35 Brandes often stayed with the Strodtmann family in Steglitz, near Berlin; he later (29.7. 1876) married Strodtmann's young wife, Henriette.

36 See: Alken Bruns, *Übersetzung als Rezeption, Skandinavische Studien*, 1977, 8, pp. 106ff.

37 László Névy, "Az emigráns irodalom" (Emigrant Literature), *Figyelő*, 1873, 7, p. 76.

38 *Ibid.*, p. 91.

39 Sándor Endrődi, "Egyéni nézetek" (Personal Views), *Figyelő*, 1872, 2, p. 301.

40 See József Harrach, "Nemzetiség a zenében" (Nationality in Music), *Figyelő*, 1872, 2, p. 441 ff.

41 Sándor Endrődi, "Zürzavarban" (In the Confusion), *Figyelő*, 1874, 4, p. 14.

42 See Sándor Endrődi, "Nemzeti jelleg" (National Character), *Figyelő*, 1875, 5, pp. 14 ff.

43 Cited from: Klaus Bohnen, *Brandes und die "Deutsche Rundschau"*, Copenhagen/Munich 1980, p. 30.

44 *Ibid.*, p. 33.

45 *Deutsche Rundschau* had 166 subscribers in Budapest between 1878 and 1888. This number was by no means inconsiderable compared with London (135), Cologne (145) and Hamburg (275). See Klaus Bohnen, *op.cit.*, p. 83.

46 Georg Brandes, *SS*, 12, p. 189.

47 József Diner-Dénes to Georg Brandes, 5.11. 1890, Brandes Archive.

48 *Ibid.*

49 *Ibid.*

50 *Ibid.*

51 *Ibid.*

52 Rien T. Segers, "Readers, Text and Author: Some Implications of Rezeptionsästhetik", *Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature*, 1975, 24, p. 15.

53 József Diner-Dénes to Georg Brandes, 5.11. 1890, Brandes Archive.

54 Endre Kiss, *A világnézet kora*, *op.cit.*, p. 19.

55 Georg Brandes to József Diner-Dénes, 18.11. 1890, MTA.

56 József Diner-Dénes to Georg Brandes, 5.11. 1890, Brandes Archive.

57 Georg Brandes to József Diner-Dénes, 18.11. 1890, MTA.

58 Gábor Zsigmond, "Katona Lajos és az *Élet* köre" (Lajos Katona and the *Élet* Circle), *Valóság* (Reality), 1976, 9, p. 76.

59 *A Doll's House* was performed on 20 April 1891. Cf. reports in Michael Meyer, *Henrik Ibsen. En biografi*, 1971, pp. 669-70.

60 Albert Apponyi (1846-1933), Conservative politician, member of the Kisfaludy Society and the Academy of Science.

61 Géza Zichy, Count (1848-1924), pianist, composer and writer. Member of the Academy of Science, the Kisfaludy Society and the Petőfi Society. Manager of the Opera House.

62 Ede Paulay (1836-94), director and artistic manager of the National Theatre. Member of the Kisfaludy Society.

63 Ferenc Pulszky (1814-97), politician, archaeologist and art historian. Followed Lajos Kossuth into exile after the suppression of the 1848 Revolution. Returned home in 1866. Director of the National Museum. Member of the Kisfaludy Society and one of the founders of the Petőfi Society. The Younger Pulszky is his son, Károly (1853-99). Among other things, he was director of *Országos Képtár* (the regional gallery).

64 Lajos Katona to Antal Hermann, undated (April 1891), EK.

65 The law about compulsory civil marriage was passed in 1894. From then onwards, mixed marriages became possible.

66 Endre Kiss, *op.cit.*, p. 12.

67 *Élet*, 1891, 1, p. 3.

68 *Ibid.*, p. 4.

69 Cf. letter from Mari Jászai to Georg Brandes, 26.10. 1900: "Natürlich habe ich noch vier andere Bücher von Ihnen, geliebter Meister, *Polen* habe ich noch vor *Shakespeare* gelesen, wie lebendig, klar ohne alle unerträgliche

Sentimentalität."

70 Brandes György, "Lengyelország romantikus irodalmából" (from: "Poland's Romantic Literature"), *Élet* 1891, 1, p. 5. (Translated from: Georg Brandes, *SS*, 10, p. 241.)

71 *Ibid.*, p. 11; (p. 248).

72 *Ibid.*, p. 15; (p. 253).

73 *Ibid.*, p. 16; (pp. 253-54).

74 *Ibid.*, p. 16; (p. 254).

75 József Diner-Dénes to Georg Brandes, 12.12. 1890, Brandes Archive.

76 József Diner-Dénes to Georg Brandes, 5.11. 1890, Brandes Archive.

77 Endre Kiss, *op.cit.*, p. 39.

78 *Ibid.*

79 József Diner-Dénes to Georg Brandes, 3.1. 1891, Brandes Archive.

80 József Diner-Dénes, "Friedrich Nietzsche", *Vergangenheit und Zukunft. Studien und Eindrücke*, Berlin 1896, p. 56.

81 *Ibid.*, p. 59.

82 *Ibid.*, p. 63.

83 *Ibid.*, p. 74.

84 *Ibid.*, p. 63.

85 József Diner-Dénes to Georg Brandes, 12.12. 1890, Brandes Archive.

86 *Ibid.*

87 *Ibid.* He is referring to Brandes' study in *Deutsche Rundschau*, 63, pp. 52-89.

88 *Ibid.*

89 Georg Brandes, "Friedrich Nietzsche", *SS*, 7, p. 601.

90 József Diner-Denés, *Vergangenheit und Zukunft*, *op.cit.*, p. 9.

91 *Ibid.*, p. 11.

92 *Ibid.*

93 Georg Brandes, "Det store Menneske, Kulturens Kilde" (The Great Individual, the Source of Culture), *SS*, 12, p. 21.

94 *Ibid.*, p. 22.

95 József Diner-Dénes, *op.cit.*, p. 35.

96 *Correspondance de Georg Brandes.* Lettres choisies et annotées par Paul Krüger, 1-4 (henceforth: *Correspondance*), Copenhagen 1952-56, 3, p. 439.

97 József Diner-Dénes to Georg Brandes, 3.1. 1891, Brandes Archive.

98 *Ibid.*

99 József Diner-Dénes, "Georg Brandes", *op.cit.*, p. 121.

100 József Diner-Dénes to Georg Brandes, 26.2. 1897, Brandes Archive.

101 József Diner-Dénes, "Georg Brandes", *op.cit.*, p. 134.

102 József Diner-Dénes to Georg Brandes, 26.2. 1897, Brandes Archive.

103 Georg Brandes to Paul Heyse, 17.10. 1881. Cited from: Jørgen Knudsen, *Georg Brandes. I modsigelsernes tegn. 1877-1883*, Copenhagen 1988, p. 221.

Ich finde, dass es grosse Armuth unserer Litteratur ist, dass gar keine Übersetzung aus Ihren Werken existirt.

Zsombor Szász to Georg Brandes

All Hungarians hope that I will write about them. The hospitality here is lavish, but it is rather tiresome never to be left alone. The newspapers report every single word that I say in private and numerous articles have already been written about me.

Georg Brandes to Herman Cohen Brandes

CHAPTER 3

GEORG BRANDES' FIRST VISIT TO BUDAPEST (1900)

A Perspective

With Diner-Dénes' personally engaged essay on Georg Brandes, we have at last reached 1896. Twenty-three years had passed since the publication of the first review of Brandes' *Emigrant Literature* in *Figyelő*. A glance through contemporary newspapers and periodicals to get some idea of the impact that the critic made in the Hungarian-speaking world, truly leaves one amazed: between 1873 and 1900, the year Brandes visited Hungary, surprisingly little was published about him or by him in the Hungarian media. It is difficult to account for this, because it was precisely during this period that interest in him was increasing sharply. We know from library accession lists, among other things, that he was read. The University Library, the Library of the Academy of Science and the Széchenyi Library had all acquired his works, as they came out. The lending records, which are still available for consultation, show that these works were studied frequently. There is thus a strange discrepancy between the lack of information in the periodicals and the readers' actual knowledge of Brandes' work. A multitude of private letters testify to the fact that the Hungarians thought they were "*au fait* with everything"[1] that Georg Brandes had done and written.

For up-to-date information about him, however, the Hungarian intellectuals had to read the German press and also, of course, although they

response had its roots in his youth. As he himself later noted in his autobiographical *Levned* (Life), when he was a student he identified strongly with Lermontov's novel *A Hero of Our Time*: "I had the bewildering feeling that for the first time in my life I had encountered my innermost, as yet dormant self, understood, interpreted and reproduced in a magnified form."[4] In other words, Russian literature formed part of Brandes' mental baggage right from his early years. This must be one reason why, when conditions in both Denmark and Germany seemed hopeless to him, he considered making his home in Moscow, among other places.[5]

Brandes had acquired his knowledge of Russian literature via the early German and French translations. In the 1880s, when Tolstoy, Turgenev and Dostoyevsky were published in Western European languages, Russian literature had its breakthrough. At a stroke, Russian novels became all the rage in Western Europe. Western European critics and readers detected an exuberant exotic quality in Russian literature that was felt to be very different from the traditional patterns of their own brands of literature. It was a "challenge from the periphery",[6] a young, unknown literature had evolved, far from the dominant literary centres, and this was a challenge to Brandes' critical mind.

It was not only the literature that aroused interest, but also the country. The previously closed-off Russia was now visited by Westerners, who described their experiences in a series of informative monographs. As shown by the Swedish literary scholar Bertil Nolin, in his thesis on Brandes and his relationship to Slavonic literature, the Danish critic made good use of these sources.

In short, Brandes was better prepared for his travels when he went to Russia than when he went to Budapest. His prior knowledge was reflected in his choice of themes for the lectures. He could touch on subjects that were topical for the audiences and take up various aspects of Russian literature for discussion.[7] The physical frameworks of the visits were also different in Russia and Hungary. Both his visits to Russia, in 1887 and 1895 respectively, were long ones. Indeed, the lecture tour to St. Petersburg and Moscow in 1887 was even extended to include a private stay in South Russia, where he got to know the country at close quarters.

Brandes' sympathy for the other Slavonic country, Poland, was undoubtedly awakened by the international press. The country's passionate struggle against its oppressors, which resulted in bloodshed both in 1831 and 1863, provoked loud protests everywhere. As a Western intellectual, it was only natural that he should sympathise with the Poles. But in addition to the positive interest and participation that he usually extended to all peoples and

minorities who were fighting for their national independence (as, for instance, the Flemings were doing for linguistic equality),[8] Brandes admitted in his autobiography *Lerned* (Life) that he never felt more at home anywhere than in Poland.[9] The visits in 1885, 1886 and 1887 left a deep impression on him, as evidenced in his travel book, *Impressions of Poland.* In this book, Brandes writes about the stay, the lectures and the valuable human contacts. His by then wide knowledge of Polish political conditions meant that to the great delight of his audience, he was able to introduce political issues into his lectures. By using expressions of sympathy, the Danish critic let his audience know that he was on their side and that he supported them in their passive resistance against their oppressors.[10]

On returning home, Brandes used his manifold experiences and impressions as the starting-point for a series of lectures about conditions in Russia and Poland. These lectures form the basis of his travel books, *Impressions of Russia* and *Impressions of Poland.* Both undoubtedly served to disseminate knowledge of political and cultural developments in the Slavonic countries. Although the books occasionally draw over-hasty conclusions, they nevertheless contain a wealth of material and a host of delicate, precise observations. They still have much to offer today's readers.

On trying to evaluate the effect the visits to the Slavonic countries had on Brandes, it has to be said that Poland and Russia seem to have made a stronger impression than Hungary. The reason for this might possibly be found in Brandes' own attitude towards the latter country. The Danish critic probably regarded Hungary as an integral part of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy; it was nowhere near so exotic as Russia. The distance - a mere five hours from Vienna - meant that he still felt himself to be at home in 'Mittel-Europa'.

But there was something else that prevented him from coming into closer contact with Hungary, viz. the general lack of information about Hungarian literature and art. From a conversation that Brandes had during his first visit to Budapest in 1900,[11] we know that the Dane regretted his ignorance of conditions in Hungary and declared that he felt handicapped since he could neither read the language nor get hold of good, adequate translations of contemporary Hungarian literature. It was an "unbekannte Welt"[12] to him, as he writes in a letter to the writer Sándor Fischer (1853-88), who had given him a massive German biography of Sándor Petőfi, the Hungarian national poet.[13] The books that Brandes received from Hungary over the years were undoubtedly useful, and he felt - to use his own expression - "Kentnissen und Eindrücken bereichert".[14] But the Danish literary critic had to be induced to visit Hungary before he could get some feeling for the atmosphere and form

his own impression of that country's cultural life. It was Georg Brandes' easily stirred curiosity to explore the unknown that led to his departure.

Hungary after the Compromise of 1867

A hundred years on, the last few decades of the 19th century in Hungary seem to be a period full of paradoxes. The country was poised on the threshold of a new age; eager for renewal, yet still clinging to its traditions; desiring independence, yet remaining in a state of dependency. On 8 June 1867, the Emperor Franz Joseph was crowned King of Hungary in the historic Matthias Church in Buda. This put an end to the feud between the Habsburgs and the Hungarian nation that had gone on for three and a half centuries. On 30 May 1867, a week before this symbolic event took place, a treaty was signed between Austria and Hungary, officially referred to as the "Compromise",[15] which legally united the two countries in a dual state, the "kaiserliche und königliche" monarchy of Austria-Hungary. Not only did the new state share the same king, it also shared the same ministries for Foreign Affairs, Defence and Finance and had a common economy.[16]

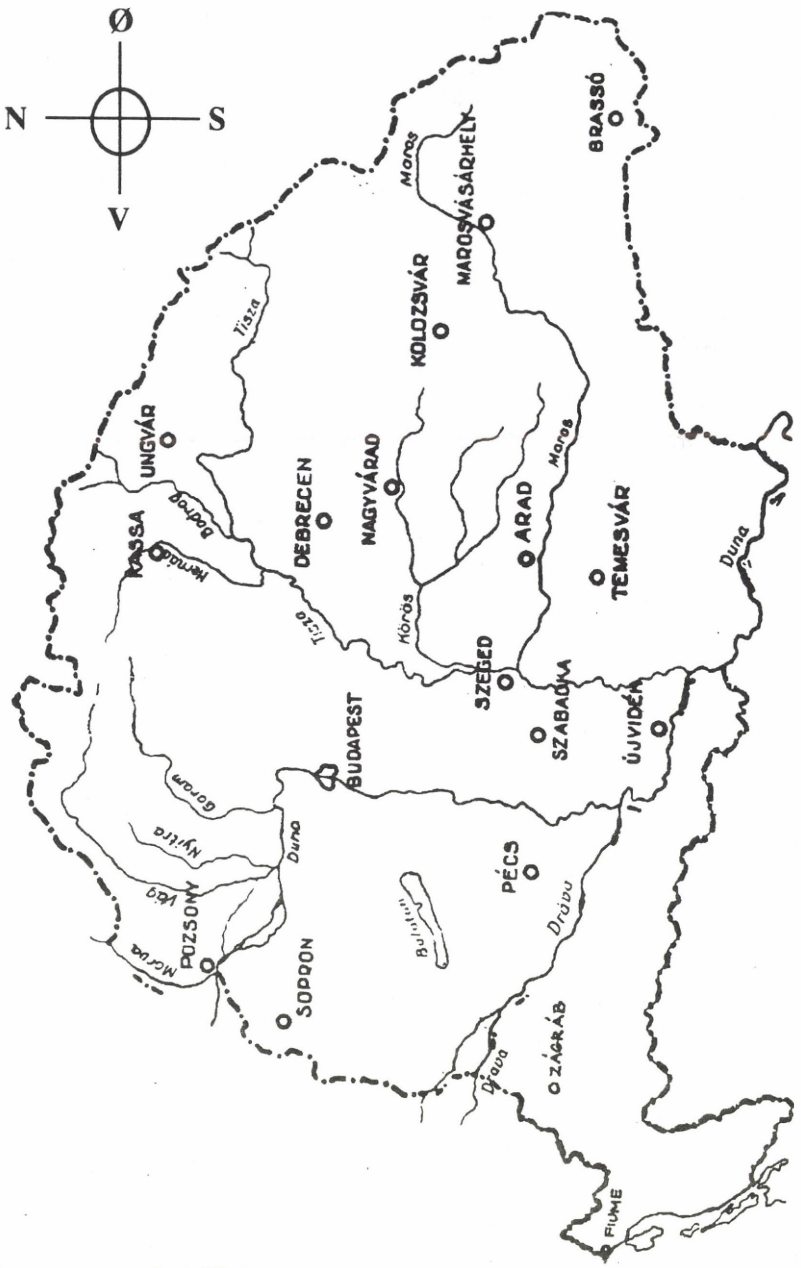
The architect of this treaty was the clever practitioner of *realpolitik* Ferenc Deák (1803-76) who, with great pragmatic insight and persistent political arguments, carried through this still controversial and frequently criticized act. Most historians[17] today, however, acknowledge that given the tense political and social situation during the period that followed the 1848 Revolution, a compromise with Austria was the only realistic solution.

The long, hard struggle for freedom started on 15 March 1848 as a bloodless revolution. The February Revolution in Paris led surprisingly quickly to one further east. But whereas the political revolt in France was inspired by a social, even a socialist idea, the equivalent revolt in Hungary could best be described as a national uprising. The year-long struggle for freedom was to cost the land dear. Sándor Petőfi (1823-49) fell at the Battle of Segesvár. The intellectual and military leaders of the revolution were brutally executed. The life of General Artúr Görgey (1818-1916) was spared, though, after diplomatic intervention; he was let off with banishment to a small village in Austria. Lajos Kossuth (1802-94), the leader of the independent Hungarian government, fled the country, together with a number of leading political activists, including Ferenc Pulszky (1814-97). Severe punishment of the insubordinate Hungarian nation now followed. Between 1849 and 1867 - the so-called Bach Period named after Alexander Bach (1811-93), the Austrian Minister for Home Affairs - the country's intellectual and political temperature sank to below freezing-point.

During these difficult years, when the Austrian bureaucracy and police kept a close watch on the Hungarians, several attempts were made to restore the country's political existence, but both diplomatic and military initiatives failed because of the lack of interest displayed by the European great powers. Although Kossuth won a great deal of sympathy during his political odyssey to England and the United States, the huge waves of emotional support did not really result in much practical help.

But what kind of political solution was possible, given Hungary's situation? There were only two realistic possibilities. The first was to retain the old constitution of 1847, based on the so-called "Pragmatic Sanction" of 1713, which affirmed the indivisible "Gesamtmonarchie" with a joint ruler, who was, however, required to respect Hungarian law. The second possiblity was based on the "April Laws" of 1848, according to which Hungary's constitutional relationship with Austria was to be maintained, but with an accountable Hungarian Prime Minister as leader of an independent Hungarian parliament. A third, but unimplementable solution was proposed by the *emigrés*, led by Kossuth. They wanted complete autonomy, in accordance with the Declaration of Independence of 14 April 1848. The conservative, pro-Habsburg aristocracy preferred to return to the conditions that prevailed before 1848, as though the revolution had never taken place. Finding himself between these two flanks, Ferenc Deák opted to carry through the above-mentioned treaty, which was based on the "Pragmatic Sanction" and which included an accountable, Hungarian prime minister, as proposed in the "April Laws".

Yet it was far from everyone who thought the establishment of the Dual Monarchy a satisfactory solution to Hungary's political situation after the failure of the War of Independence of 1848-49. The "constitutional and parliamentary autonomy" within the monarchy that formed the cornerstone of the treaty was regarded by the treaty's opponents as an insult to the nation. The question of national sovereignty continued to be a very sensitive issue. Two distinct fronts were created, closely linked to partisanship for or against the treaty, which were to have a strong influence on political consciousness for many years to come. This 'for-or-against' attitude was almost an automatic reflex that reacted with small twitches to all irritations brought on by political and cultural developments - no matter how trivial each one might be. But the treaty was a reality and Hungary had to learn to live with Austria. In the last analysis, the treaty was responsible for the sudden awakening from the dreams of freedom, for the realisation that the time was more than ripe for self-examination and for a review of the country's relationship with the rest of Europe. The vulnerable, antagonistic,



Map of Hungary as it looked in 1867. Croatia and Slovenia are included.

intellectual atmosphere led indirectly to a steadily increasing interest in affairs and events outside the borders of Hungary.

The political changes could not help but affect the whole of society. The parliamentary system that formed part of the treaty created a basis for a bourgeois-liberal society. Of course, this tendency was already apparent in 1848, but after the treaty the process speeded up. With the growing industrialisation, the brisk construction of roads and railways and the bold entrepreneurial spirit, agriculture was suddenly pushed down into second place. As a result of the changes in the economic base, the proportion of workers involved in agriculture declined from 75% of the labour force in 1869 to 64% in 1910, while the proportion of those involved in industry grew from 10% to 23.3%.[18]

The property-owning aristocracy managed to acquire a powerful position for themselves in the new, capitalist development. No self-respecting bank or industrial concern could do without an aristocratic-sounding surname on its board. However, it was a time of decline for the Hungarian peasantry - the two million peasant families and three and a half million so-called agrarian proletarians who formed the majority of the Hungarian population. They found it increasingly difficult to make ends meet. Small farmers and smallholders simply had to stop trying to make a living out of agriculture. For many of them an enforced move to a town or emigration to America was a last desperate attempt to keep body and soul together. Entire villages in Hungary were depopulated at the turn of the century.

But the strongest ferment and the biggest social unrest could be observed in the rapidly growing middle class, the actual nucleus of which was formed by the lower reaches of the aristocracy and the landed gentry. This so-called 'historical middle class', which had formed Hungary's middle class during the 1848 Revolution, began to use the English term 'gentry' to describe themselves in the 1870s. By doing this they hoped to draw a distinction between themselves, with their inherited, aristocratic rights, and the increasingly powerful, new bourgeois middle class. At this time the gentry were already in debt and had sunk into partial social decline; by the end of the century they had to put up with leading a middle class existence in the towns, without the financial security they had previously enjoyed as landowners. As a result of this social descent, the gentry had to apply for posts in the newly created administration and received, by way of consolation, several leading posts in the ministries and in the state administration.

Queen Elisabeth, dressed in deep mourning, lays a wreath on the catafalque of Ferenc Deák, while an angel (the genie of time) casts an illuminating glow over the dead statesman, who implemented a treaty between Austria and Hungary. The ribbons on the wreath symbolise the interdependence of the Dual Monarchy. (Painting by Mihály Zichy)

The actual bourgeois middle class was a veritable hotchpot of people. The Hungarian bourgeoisie was a melting pot that absorbed individuals with very different social and racial backgrounds. The wealthiest and most numerous minority groups were the Germans (Schwabians) and the Jews. In 1868 parliament passed a resolution that gave equal rights to all citizens, whatever their nationality or religion. This resolution led to an increased flow of people into the capital, especially of those belonging to the Jewish minority. In 1870 there were approximately 45,000 Jews in Budapest, but by 1890 the number had risen to 102,000.[19] The process of assimilation took place very quickly, though not always, of course, without problems. In the last quarter of the 19th century, second and third generation Jews became both linguistically and culturally assimilated. It would be wrong, though, to regard this element of the population as an economically, socially or culturally homogeneous, integrated group. Nevertheless, these young members of the bourgeoisie soon realized their strength and in many areas they became the leaders of fashion.[20] They were born freethinkers with a great deal of sympathy for political radicalism and it seemed natural to them to seek inspiration from abroad, especially from Western Europe where the middle classes had stronger traditions and a more solid background.

Thus, in the wake of the treaty, a vigorous middle class emerged, which quickly established itself as consumers and producers of literature. In the twenty years between 1870 and 1890, a Hungarian intelligentsia grew up, which was both interested and active in literature. The earlier link between membership of the aristocracy and level of education was quickly disintegrating. The aristocratic landed gentry had gradually lost its earlier patent on culture. The dissemination of literature was no longer a lofty national duty but a more down-to-earth, practical question of profitability and economic interests.

Budapest played a leading role in every aspect. In 1872 the twin towns of Buda and Pest were joined together. This wonderful capital city on both banks of the Danube, which took away the breath of foreign visitors, succeeded within the space of a few years in becoming the country's financial centre and the unrivalled focus of intellectual life. The area around Budapest was still unusually varied as far as the nationality of its people was concerned. But by 1867 72% of its population spoke Hungarian.[21] As mentioned above, two new ethnic groups were particularly prominent in the demographic composition of the city: the German administrators who had been moved to Hungary after the crushing of the 1848 Revolution, and the immigrants of Jewish extraction. Both of these 'foreign' elements helped swell the size of the reading public. Many of the 'newcomers' were absorbed

Bodnár had devised a philosophical system that was influenced by the French philosopher Alfred Fouillé (1838-1912). He had built his unique dialectic on the latter's theory of the abstract idea as a force that intervenes in causal relations. According to Bodnár, periods of action and reaction succeed each other in history. But the reaction is never a return to the previous period of reaction; on the contrary, it is an advance since the reaction automatically assimilates any significant developments in the immediately preceding period of activity. Bodnár's historical determinism functioned as a set of universal laws. The theory was also applied to literary works. When explaining the origins of new genres and styles, or describing types of author or artist, he took as his point of departure an evolutionary theory that was based on this dialectic method, according to which the reaction, too, contributed to the universal process of development.

It must have been difficult for Brandes to form any conclusions about Bodnár's philosophical system, of which he was only offered a small sample. In the context of his reception, however, it is the request itself that is interesting. The very naturalness with which this Hungarian approached Brandes, speaks volumes about his status in that country. Bodnár, like the entire circle involved with the liberal periodicals, was convinced that contact with the outside world, and especially with the intellectual currents of Western Europe, would help the cultural development of Hungary. He was, after all, attached both to *Figyelő* and, after the demise of that periodical, to *Élet*.

The literary historian Zsigmond Bodnár sent Brandes his 3-volume work on the history of Hungarian literature.

The Hungarian recipients' attempts to make contact were not confined to the written word; Brandes also had many uninvited callers. In 1894, Béla Lázár (1869-1950), the 25-year-old literary critic and member of the *Élet* group, visited Copenhagen. His first mission in the Danish capital was to visit Brandes. He wrote his own letter of introduction:

> Unterfertiger, der ein junger, ungarischer Professor ist, bittet Sie, seinen Meister, den er viele geistige Anregung verdankt, einen Besuch abstatten zu dürfen. Bin nach Kopenhagen gekommen um hier die dänische Sprache und durch Sie, die dänische Litteratur besser kennen zu lernen.[22]

Lázár was received although the visit must have been inconvenient, since Brandes was preparing a journey to Bremen to visit his old acquaintance, the writer Arthur Fitger. This is how Lázár remembers his meeting with 'the master':

> I spent the summer of 1894 in Scandinavia. With Brandes in Copenhagen, with Ibsen in Kristiania ... At the time, Brandes was working on his book on Shakespeare.[23] It was almost impossible to coax him away from his study, he would only go out in the evenings and he only talked about *Hamlet* and *King Lear*, in other words, about his own problems. At one point he talked about Charlotte Stieglitz,[24] and this aroused my interest to such a degree that I got hold of her diary at the Royal Library. The story inspired me to write the short story *Myria*. I started to write it in Copenhagen and it was published with a dedication to Georg Brandes.[25]

During his stay in Copenhagen, Lázár tried to get one of his short stories published in the daily newspaper *Politiken*. He sent the manuscript to Brandes, who read it "with great enjoyment"[26] and advised the Hungarian critic to contact the editors of *Taarnet* (The Tower).

Although the projects did not always come to anything, these contacts indicate that there was a close, fruitful relationship between author and recipient. This interaction became even more pronounced towards the end of the century, and resulted in Brandes receiving a firm invitation to visit Hungary in 1898. The exchanges of letters between the Hungarian recipients and Brandes were a special form of contact that helped nourish and catalyze a continued interest in his works and his person. Today these letters are a priceless source for the history of this critic's reception. According to

Günther Grimm, such documents as these ought to be regarded as "highly classified".[27]

The invitation to Brandes came exactly 25 years after the review of *Emigrant Literature*. What changes had taken place in the relationship between Brandes and his Hungarian public in the intervening quarter of a century? To be true, no translation of his more important works had as yet been published, but generally speaking, his writings progressed during these years from being subjects for inclusion in the literary surveys of the periodicals to a new status as literary products *per se*. From the readers' point of view, the publication of even a few of Brandes' writings in Hungarian meant that they had direct access to the Danish critic, whose works the Hungarians had not, until then, been able to read in their mother tongue, so that they had had to seek information about them in the German-language press. Not surprisingly, this had certain consequences for the readers: the direct meeting with the works of Brandes via the mother tongue gave further nourishment to the wish to establish contact with the person behind the works. As we shall see below, Brandes was persuaded to visit Hungary. But a few more years were to pass before he could meet his readers in person, in Budapest.

Preliminaries

The preparations for Georg Brandes' visit to Budapest began in 1898. A circle of intellectuals, who met every day at the *Lipótvárosi Kaszinó* (Leopoldstad Casino) club, were behind the invitation to the Danish critic to visit Budapest. Lipótváros was at the time one of Budapest's new, wealthy districts. It is situated on the Pest side of the city, north of the actual city centre (Belváros), and it straddles both sides of the last section of the ring road, Lipót körút (the Leopold Ring). The fashionable part of Lipótváros was situated south of the ring. It was the area that embraced the imposing, neo-gothic Parliament building on the Danube Quay, and the streets near the Budapest Basilica, that eclectic cathedral with its heavy, oversized dome. The casino quickly became a meeting place for wealthy citizens and for bourgeois intellectuals, especially those of Jewish extraction. Its members included a number of active politicians, journalists, writers and theatre people.

In 1898, one of the members of the club, Vilmos Huszár (1872-1931), Professor of Comparative Literature, sent an invitation to Brandes:

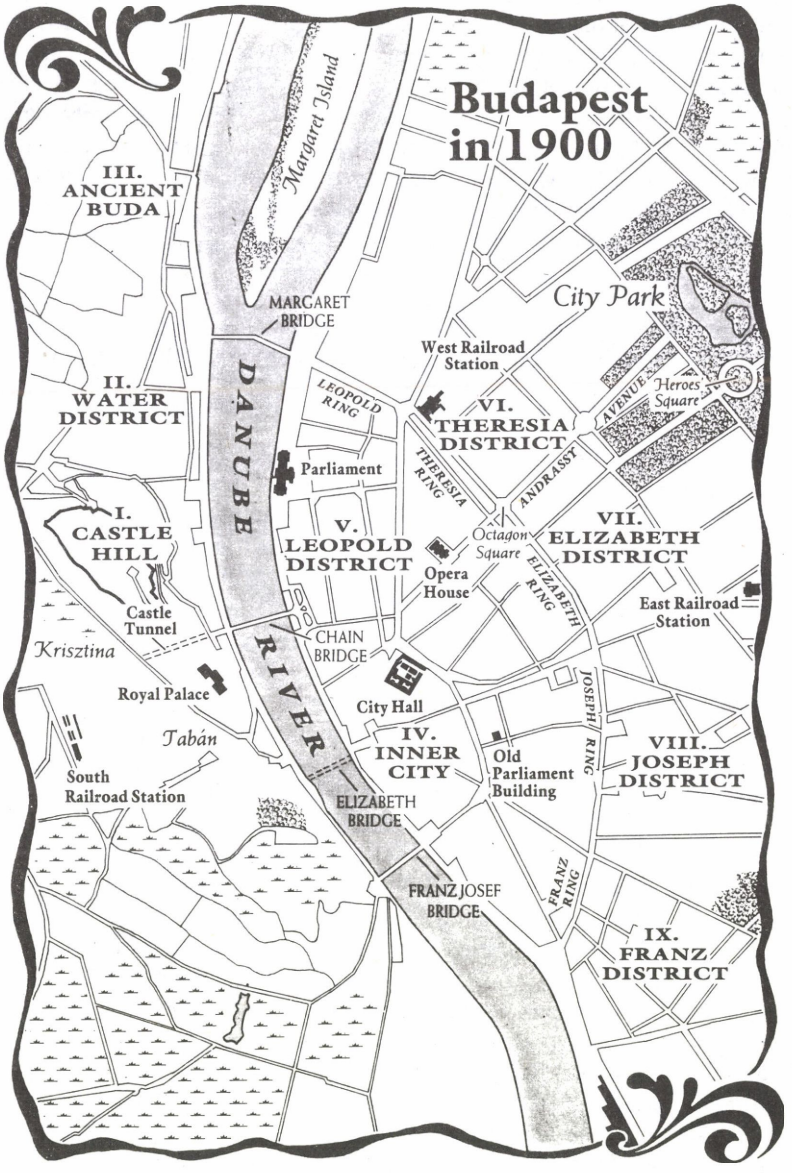
> In Name des "Lipótvárosi Kaszinó", eines der angesehensten Clubs in Budapest, erlaube ich mir Sie höflichst zu ersuchen, ob Sie uns nicht die Ehre zu Theil kommen lassen wollten: in unserem Casino, jetzt oder später, über ein allgemein interessantes Thema eine Vorlesung zu halten. Ganz Budapest würde sich freuen, Sie hier zu begrüssen können, und wohl verbindlich sein für den Genuss, den Ihre Vorlesung bieten dürfte.[28]

This seemed less official and, to some extent, more spontaneous than the invitations from other Eastern European countries, such as Poland and Russia. The Casino was not an official institution. While Brandes' lectures in Poland were regarded as a political event (they were 'Europe's protest at what was happening in Poland'), and his visit to Russia had been given the universities' official seal of approval, here was a social club purporting to represent "ganz Budapest" and "alle die intelligenten Kreise in Ungarn".[29] Dr Huszár cheerfully and unhesitatingly issued a personal invitation to the celebrity, Georg Brandes. It was precisely this presumptiousness and this compulsion to act that attracted the literary critic to the new, bourgeois liberals. In the middle of 1898 he agreed to go there and Professor Huszár could joyfully reply:

> Das Leopoldstädter Casino und dessen Wirth, Herr Rust, wie auch alle intelligenten Kreise Ungarns, empfingen mit der grössten Freude die Nachricht, dass Ew. Hochwohlgeborene unserer Bitte gütigst entgegenkommen und geneigt sind, im Casino eine Vorlesung zu halten.[30]

However, Brandes did not go to Budapest at the end of 1898, as had originally been planned. He paid two visits to Poland in late 1898, but did not go on to Budapest. As he writes to his Russian translator and *confidante-cum*-pen-friend, Vera Spasskaja (1855-1938):

> I went to Berlin with the intention of going on to Galicia (Cracow, Lemberg) and Hungary (Budapest) to which cities I had been invited; but I was called back home, since my mother's condition was very bad. I spent 14 days here at home; my mother's condition improved a little, I then travelled again, spent 14 days in Cracow and Lemberg ... but just as I was about to go on to Budapest, I was called home again, because my mother had had an apoplectic fit.[31]



Map of Budapest. During his stay there, Brandes mostly frequented the area between the right bank of the Danube and the Ring Roads.

In December of that year Brandes himself fell ill, so ill that he was unable to attend his beloved mother's funeral.[32] He had a bad attack of the phlebitis that had plagued him in 1871 during his stay in Rome. The year 1897 was marked by the illness, and during the course of 1898 and 1899 he was confined to bed for seven months in all. It is not to be wondered at that young Huszár became quite depressed because of the uncertainty surrounding the visit. After all, it was he who was responsible for the arrangement. He wrote politely to Brandes:

> Sie würden uns zu grossem Dank verplichten, wenn Sie mich verständigen wollten, wie es mit Ihrer w. Gesundheit steht, und wann können wir darauf rechnen, dass Sie uns mit Ihrem Besuche beehren werden.[33]

In November 1898, a single discordant note disturbed this long, enduring correspondence. Brandes was guardedly asked if it was he who had been behind an article in a "Copenhagen newspaper"[34] in which the recently assassinated Empress of Austria-Hungary had been written of in a disrespectful manner. Although Huszár did not really believe that Brandes would used his pen to attack the much-loved "Patrona Hungariae", he asked him to deny it, in order to "put an end to the rumours".[35]

What was Huszár referring to? On 15 September 1898, Johannes Jørgensen published a slanderous article in *Nationaltidende* (National News), attacking both Brandes and the Russian anarchist Peter Kropotkin, whom Brandes had recently met. The article was called "The Real Villain".[36] In it, Kropotkin was accused of having inspired the murder of the Hungarian Queen. It must have been this article that Huszár had got to hear about.

An attack of this kind was totally unexpected, considering that on 11 September, the day after Elisabeth's violent death, Brandes had written a feature article for *Politiken* in which, distressed by the senseless murder, he had called the action of Luigi Luccheni "horrible and insane".[37] On 26 September, Brandes responded with an article in *Politiken*, vigorously denying Johannes Jørgensen's accusations and at the same time arranging for a long account by Kropotkin to be printed.

Brandes reacted speedily to Huszár's letter; his denial was immediately sent off to Budapest. Apparently interpreting the carefully worded, though damning accusation by the Hungarians as a sign that they did not wish to see him after all, he himself suggested postponing the visit, or cancelling it altogether. However, he received a letter from Huszár in reply, in which the

Hungarian professor explained the situation:

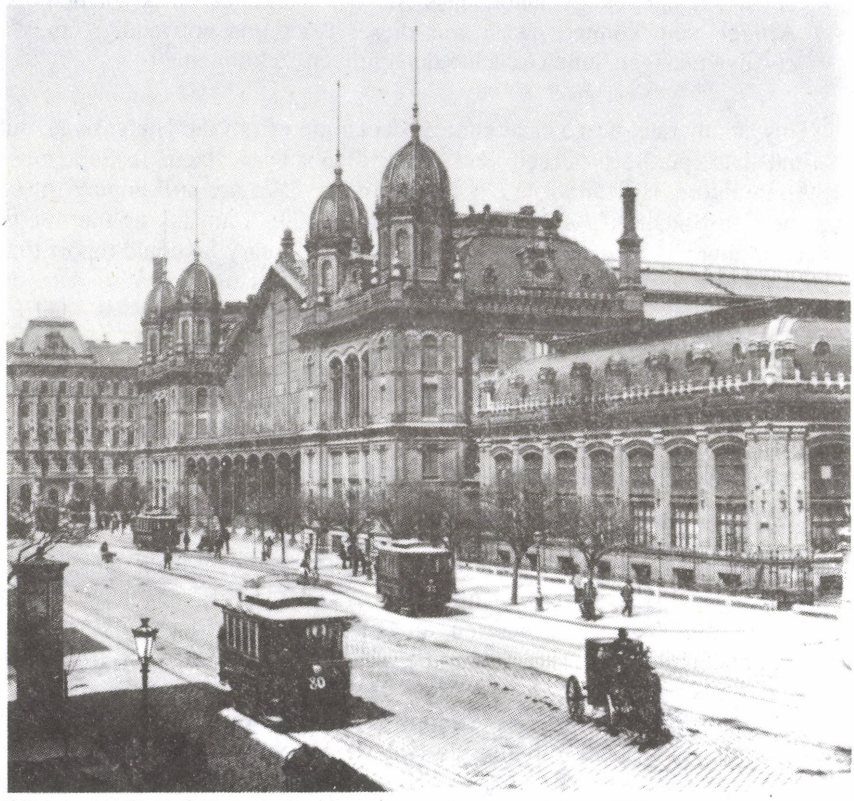
> Ich weiss nicht, ob Sie mein Telegramm erhalten haben, in welchem ich Ihnen mitteilte, dass wir Sie mit der grössten Freude, *unbedingt* erwarten. Ihren Brief habe ich erhalten; ich habe nie einen Augenblick geglaubt, dass Sie der Verfasser eines solchen Artikels sein können. Doch war dieser Brief uns notwendig, um etwaige unangenehme Gerüchte dementieren zu können.[38]

This, at any rate, was a clear enough declaration from the Hungarians, but a final date for the proposed visit had still not been fixed. In September 1899, therefore, Huszár wrote a polite reminder: "We are still hoping to see you here in Budapest", and again, in January 1900: "I am taking the liberty of reminding you of your promise." Finally, in February he could report that "with great pleasure [we] have read your letter, giving a precise date on which to expect you".[39]

On 27 March 1900, Brandes finally arrived in Budapest.

The Visit

The most prominent members of Budapest society, with the Mayor at their head, turned up at the Western Railway Station to meet Georg Brandes.[40] The celebrated guest was driven in a coach and six[41] along the brand-new ring road, whose sections, by some ironic twist of fate, had been named after members of the House of Habsburg: Leopold, Theresia, Elisabeth, Josef and Franz. In 1900 Budapest was an elegant city. Imposing buildings and pretentious boulevards underlined the country's thousand-year link with Europe. In 1896 Hungary celebrated its millennium, which became an unforgettable, flamboyant demonstration of the nation's achievements. In an exhibition area adjacent to the newly laid-out Városliget (City Park) a series of historical buildings were constructed, faithful copies of churches, palaces and aristocratic residences from every corner of the kingdom. This important landmark was to be celebrated in style. On the beautiful, spacious Square of Heroes (*Hősök-tere*), interested visitors could immerse themselves in Hungarian history, brought to life in bronze and granite. It was at this time that the Museum of Fine Arts and the Exhibition Hall opened their doors. The two, symmetrically positioned palaces of art formed a fitting focal point at the end of the well-proportioned, elegant Avenue (*Sugár-út*), a successful imitation of the Champs Élysée.



George Brandes travelled to Budapest from Vienna by train. He was received at the Western Railway Station. This imposing building was designed by the French architect, Eiffel.

Brandes' visit was quite an event for the city. The day before his arrival, *Budapesti Napló* carried the news of it on its front page:

> The world famous theatre critic (*sic!*) and aesthete will be spending a week in Budapest, with the intention of learning more about the Hungarian theatre and Hungarian cultural life.[42]

He was given a tumultuous reception; everyone wanted to meet and greet the Danish guest. Brandes stayed at the Hotel Royal, not far from Lipótváros, to which crowds of people streamed in the days that followed, and he was inundated with invitations. Evidence that Brandes' reception exceeded all expectations can be found in a spoof diary entry, published a few days after his arrival:

> Budapest 27 March. I arrived and had scarcely had time to get off the train when some person or other came bounding up to me.
>
> "Are you called Brandes, sir?"
>
> I was afraid and was just about to say yes when someone else came bounding up...
>
> "Are you Brandes, sir?"
>
> I was terrified but before I could open my mouth, I was surrounded by a third, a fourth, a tenth unknown person...
>
> "I'm afraid I am. I must admit that I wish I was not called Brandes." I had hardly uttered my fateful reply when a hundred men began to chant at the top of their voices:
>
> "Great man! Great intellectual! Giant! Flash of lightening in the night!"
>
> "Good God, how will all this end?" The worst moment of my life had arrived. Not even the moment of death was as fearful as what was then about to befall me. It would be the end of me if I had to listen to all the speeches of welcome. There was no way out. Suddenly, I was rescued by a Hungarian with a rapt expression on his face.

"I will help you, sir..." On saying this, he pushed his way through the crowd towards me, and by causing a moment's disturbance he was able to lead me away through a back door. We got into a carriage and drove off. I turned towards the unknown man:

"You are my benefactor, sent by God!" And I shook him warmly by the hand. "I am grateful to you. Just tell me what you want. Everything I have is yours ... Would you like me to make you immortal?"

"I don't want anything as big as that; all I want is for you to listen to my speech of welcome..."[43]

The reasoning behind the publication of this strange piece was double-edged: there were obviously some people who thought that the exaggerated homage paid to this foreign dignitary was in bad taste, and merely served to expose the Hungarians' empty rhetoric and their lack of a proper sense of occasion. The malicious tone in this dubious diary extract gives the reader some indication of the early seeds of discontent that were present at Brandes' reception, in that it heralds the controversial attitude of the media, which did not become apparent until after the turn of the century.

This feature shows that, right from the start, the press polemicized on the question of Brandes' visit. But this was by no means a specifically Hungarian phenomenon. The history of Brandes' reception in both Poland and Russia offers many parallels, precisely because the conservative press abhorred all foreign influences that could highlight conditions at home. The anonymous author of the diary entry clearly shows his scorn, but despite the sarcasm his tone is nevertheless more muted than that of his Russian colleagues. When Brandes visited St. Petersburg in 1887, the conservative newspaper *Ezhenedel'noje Obozrenie* (Daily Survey) immediately pounced on those who prostrated themselves before "all types of garbage"[44] from abroad. The article asserts quite openly that 75% of Brandes' public are just "a flock of sheep"[45] who go wherever they are directed. It concludes that those who have not learnt to value what is their own, are more likely to be duped by what is foreign, and it warns against the "import" of foreign, sciolistic, cultural personalities. The xenophobia quickly took an anti-semitic direction in Russia. Yet, to the Hungarian Press around the turn of the century, Georg Brandes was still the *Danish* literary critic.

One could not really say that there was a rift between the Jewish and non-

Jewish population in Budapest in 1900, even though the Jewish contingent was becoming increasingly visible in the internal life of the city. What do the statistics reveal? At that time the assimilated Jewish population made up a fifth of the entire population (733,000) and represented 40% of the city's electorate.[46] The Jews gained an increasingly firm foothold, especially in the capital, not only in the worlds of commerce and finance but also in the city's cultural and intellectual life. The Hungarian-born historian, John Lukács, states that in 1890 36% of all journalists in Budapest were of Jewish extraction, and by 1910 the percentage had increased to 42%.[47] But just as there were no purely 'Christian' (*keresztény*) periodicals, neither were there any that could be called purely 'Jewish'. There was free intermingling between the communities.

Brandes aroused enormous interest among the reading public of the capital, and during his week in Budapest, he was the leading figure in the social life of the city. Admittedly, he did have certain preferences. He wanted to experience the Hungarian theatre in its natural habitat. In Prague, some years earlier, he had attended a rehearsal for the Hungarian dramatist Imre Madách's (1823-64) play, *The Tragedy of Man* (1859-60), which in spite of "a wealth of trappings" left him cold; so cold that he remembered it wrongly when he wrote about it in his autobiography.[48] But now, in Budapest, he had a chance to go to the theatre. Between 1896 and 1900 three new, permanent theatres had been built. Budapest could boast an Opera House, a Comic Opera (*Vigszinház*), a People's Theatre (*Népszinház*), and above all, a National Theatre (*Nemzeti Szinház*), as well as the smaller theatres.

The writer whom Brandes was most eager to meet was the nestor of Hungarian literature, Mór Jókai (1825-1904). He was one of the few Hungarian writers who already in his early career had been translated into German, and even into Danish. By chance, Jókai and his young wife were at the National Theatre on the same evening as Brandes. During the interval, a close acquaintance led Brandes to Jókai's box. According to Bella Nagy's memoirs,[49] without any beating about the bush, Brandes boldly asked the Hungarian novelist for an invitation to his home. The next day, Jókai went to see the literary critic at the Hotel Royal and invited him to a "quiet dinner party". Brandes' reply arrived the same evening:

> Verehrter grosser Meister, Es wird mir die grösste Ehre und Freude sein, Montag um 2 Uhr bei Ihnen zu speisen. Sie dürfen gar nicht Gesellschaft für mich einladen. Sie, verehrter Meister, und Ihre schöne Gattin sind selbstverständlich für mich die aller beste Gesellschaft.[50]

The nestor of Hungarian literature, Mór Jókai, with his young wife, the actress Bella Nagy.

As expected, a host of celebrities were gathered around the dinner table. Brandes was given an opportunity to meet many of the most important contemporary poets, writers and statesmen. Brandes wrote as follows about his visit to the Jókais:

> [I] sat at the table of the person who is virtually unanimously regarded as the greatest man in Hungary. Maurus Jókai (or as his name is written in Hungarian, Jókai Mór) is now 75 years old and was famous ... during the 1848 Revolution. But since then, the glory attached to his name has not diminished, it has only increased. His powers of imagination were tremendous and his spirits unfailing. An unbroken creative drive that has led to the publication of some three hundred volumes, which captivated the admiration of the nation. His rather special kind of imagination and its wonderful, heterogeneous force soon made this man, who was the friend and comrade of Petőfi in 1848, pre-eminent in his own country, and kept him so until his old age.[51]

One celebration succeeded another, but the circle of those actually receiving Brandes was comparatively small. Publishers of periodicals, editors, *litterati*, theatre people and patrons of the arts formed the nucleus of this group of intellectuals. Everybody knew everybody else and many spheres of interest overlapped. And since it was felt that the Hungarian *beau monde* could not be considered complete without an aristocratic frame, Brandes also

met prominent members of the Hungarian nobility in all the salons that had any self-respect.

Brandes had a rare talent for making contact with people and for getting the most out of the fleeting meetings that were his lot on his brief journeys. He was sensitive to atmosphere and had the ability to feel his way towards what really mattered in whatever place he was visiting. He could be charming when he wanted to be. Brandes sent his father an exuberant account of his experiences:

> I have a room that is 32 feet long and 18 feet wide, a carriage with two horses at my disposal and everything is free. Yesterday I gave a talk to great applause and afterwards a reception was held for me. There were four speeches in my honour and I spoke very well in reply.
>
> In all the theatres, I sit in the director's box at their invitation and I am invited out every day, both at midday and in the evening. The Minister of Agriculture wants me to spend a few days in the provinces getting to know the country better, so I suppose I will spend a few days doing that.[52]
>
> All Hungarians hope that I will write about them. The hospitality here is lavish, but it is rather tiresome never to be left alone.
>
> The newspapers report every single word that I say in private and numerous articles have already been written about me. The illustrated newspapers display my portrait. I had to be photographed at once.[53]

Nor was the account of this hospitable country and the enthusiastic Magyars any less effusive in his letters to Mme de Caillavet in Paris, Arthur Schnitzler in Vienna and Vera Spasskaja in Moscow. As well as these letters and a few, scattered descriptions in his diary, Brandes published an essay about his sojourn in Hungary. He was inspired to write it by one of the guests at the dinner party that Jókai gave for him.

> Six months ago in Budapest, as I was about to take my place at table, I had a great surprise. A tall, well-proportioned, well-built man with white hair and a beard approached me, and when our host introduced us to each other, he said: General Görgei.[54] I was

amazed and said: not the General Görgei from 1848? The person I was addressing smiled and said that it was indeed he. And it really was he with whom I was now unexpectedly standing face to face, though in my ignorance I did not realize he was still alive. He stood as straight as a ramrod, wearing his 83 years so lightly that he looked more like a man in his fifties. He was quick in his movements and his conversation was lively.[55]

Arthur Görgei, General in the War of Independence 1848--49. Georg Brandes met him at the home of Mór Jókai. This meeting inspired the critic to write an essay about the great Hungarian.

Here Brandes met, to use his own expression, "the man of action that men of letters might envy." Görgei held the rank of General during the War of Independence in 1848, but after the Russian advance he was forced to surrender to the joint, Russo-Austrian army. The Austrians interned him for almost 20 years and the Hungarians branded him a traitor. However, Brandes continues:

> ...all these troubles had now deserted him or had passed over his head, and now here he sat, erect... When he was only 30 years old, this man had made the leap from plain lieutenant to the highest position in the land, and when he was only 31 years old, his life's achievement was already behind him, his place in world history was assured and from that time onwards, he had lived the life of an ordinary, private person, without becoming bitter or apathetic.
>
> Such things do sometimes happen in the lives of extraordinary people who are born for action.[56]

The account of the meeting with Arthur Görgei shows that Brandes viewed Hungary from a historical perspective. The 1848 Revolution was of central importance in his consciousness, since it linked the fate of Hungary to those of other European countries, in which revolutions had flared up in a similar cause, viz. that of national independence. It is not by pure coincidence that the essay on "Arthur Görgei" was published in a volume entitled *Undertrykte Folkeslag* (Oppressed Peoples). To Brandes, Görgei was a genuine representative of national liberalism and one of the "great men" of Europe.

> Now there is certainly nothing strange about a great man being an ordinary, quiet human being in his daily life. Only a child imagines that great men constantly behave like great men. Only totally immature people expect to see, from their external appearance alone, what they were like and how they acted in the important situations in their lives. Nevertheless, the sight of Görgei at the table had a curious effect on me. I involuntarily looked for the soldierly sternness ... the staunch defiance.[57]

It was unquestionably the parts they played in the freedom struggle of 1848 that shaped Brandes' favourable attitude towards Mór Jókai and Arthur Görgei. But personality was also clearly a factor: at the core of Görgei was his willpower, his fearlessness and his powers of endurance; all qualities that Brandes himself possessed and was able to appreciate. Görgei slotted naturally into the series of great men that Brandes had portrayed during the previous ten years.

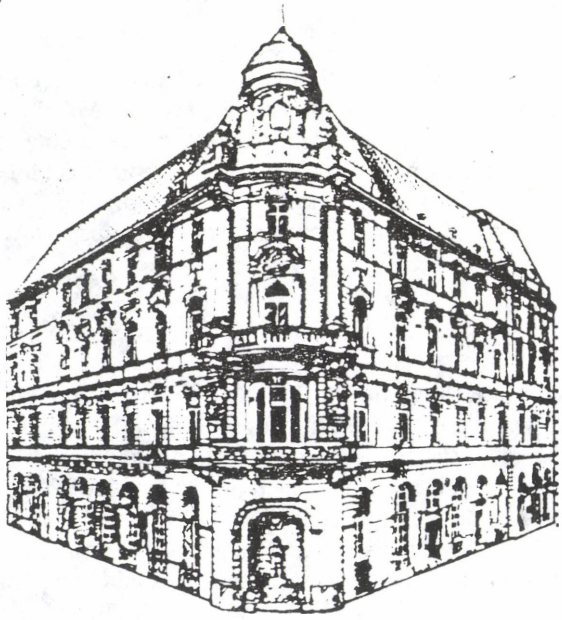
The Lecture

Brandes' lecture was held on 31 March 1900 in Leopoldstadt Casino's assembly hall, where the Danish critic was met by a festive crowd of invited guests. Brandes talked about Henrik Ibsen, although his first proposal had been that he should talk about the reading of literature ("On Reading"). It was presumably the directors of the club who had asked Brandes to change his topic. Ibsen was extremely popular in Hungary around the turn of the century, and in Budapest alone several Ibsen plays had been put on by 1900. The audience also knew of Brandes' close connection with the Norwegian dramatist and many were familiar with his writings on Ibsen, which had appeared in various German-language publications. So the lecture was

anticipated with particular pleasure.

Brandes lectured in German, at the request of Professor Huszár, who believed that German, though unpopular on political grounds, was at least a language that people could understand. Brandes began his lecture with the following, introductory words:

> The language in which I am going to address you is not your own language, nor is it mine. I must admit that I have no special affection for the German language and, as far as I have heard, neither have you. Nevertheless, on this occasion, I must have recourse to it since what matters most, after all, is that we should understand one another. I learnt this language at the age of thirty. And although I have full mastery of it, my pronunciation unfortunately leaves much to be desired. It is no empty phrase if I ask for your indulgence. I will talk about Henrik Ibsen, whom you also know and admire. This time, however, I will not be speaking about him in his capacity as a writer, but as a good childhood friend.[58]



The Leopoldstad Casino was housed in this building. It was here that Brandes gave his lecture on Ibsen, on 31 March 1900.

A beginning such as this could not fail. It was personal and showed solidarity with the audience. In fact, Brandes had used the same introduction for his lecture on 25 November 1898 at Lemberg (Lvov),[59] to great applause. Now he hit a note of intimacy that greatly contributed to the success of the lecture. It was not planned along academic lines; on the contrary, it was in the form of a loosely connected chain of anecdotes that served to illuminate Ibsen's character. Among other things, Brandes talked of their correspondence in 1871, when he was ill in Rome and Ibsen wrote to him from Dresden. "I firmly believe," said Brandes, "without wishing to appear immodest, that these letters will come to play a not insignificant part in literary history."[60] Brandes was able to arrange his biographical sources in such a way that the lecture was transformed into something more than anecdotes, gossip and the repetition of familiar material. He brought the personality of Ibsen to life for his audience. He had one piece of well-intentioned advice, especially aimed at those connected with the theatre. He warned them against the overinterpretation of Ibsen's plays that he had often experienced in performances abroad.

Judging from the text of the lecture that was published in *Budapesti Napló*, it would seem that this lecture evening was first and foremost a social event. The fact that the lecture nevertheless left a good impression is due to the way in which these anecdotes were presented. It was the intimacy that made such an impression on7 the audience. They were not used to that kind of thing from Hungarian critics, who clung desperately to established academic traditions.

One of Brandes' other strengths as a lecturer was his vitality coupled with linguistic virtuosity. Once on the dais in front of an audience, Brandes was able to put his illness and his 58 years behind him:

> As soon as [he] began to speak, all traces of tiredness disappeared. He seemed to become a new man. It is as though the spoken word for him is some kind of magical, invigorating potion... His features took on a changing, playful life of their own, his brow lost its wrinkles and became saturated with light; a warm, hearty smile emerged from his beard, and his otherwise lack-lustre eyes shone and became darker, glowing with an fiery conviction, a will to seek out the truth, ready for action.[61]

The charisma must have worked, for enthusiastic letters followed in the wake of the lecture. He also attracted a number of admirers (to be more specific, female admirers). The most prominent of these was Hungary's most

talented actress, Mari Jászai. That faithful chronicler Vilmos Huszár could not resist telling Brandes that since his visit, the bookshops had sold many more copies of his book on Shakespeare than before. Other writings of his were also in demand. As he writes, "Ihr Aufenthalt bei uns scheint doch von Einfluss gewesen zu sein!"[62] But how did the press react to all this?

The First Response

As expected, the Hungarian press followed both the preparations for Brandes' visit and the visit itself with great interest. In addition to *Budapesti Napló*, the German-language newspaper *Pester Lloyd* also reported the forthcoming visit. On 1 April 1900, the day after the lecture evening, the editor of *Budapesti Napló*, József Vészi (1858-1940), one of Brandes' personal acquaintances in Budapest, published the full text of Brandes' lecture and rounded it off with his own, enthusiastic comments.

The newspapers were followed by the capital's leading periodicals, *Uj Idők* (The New Times) and *A Hét* (The Week). The former was a popular family magazine, edited by one of the most prominent novelists at the turn of the century, Ferenc Herczeg (1863-1944).[63] It had a comparatively large circulation and was read primarily by the upper middle class (*úri középosztály*) and by the gentry. For fifty years (1894-1944) *Uj Idők* was the most popular periodical, not only in the capital but also in the provinces, with an impressive number of women readers. Its contents were entertaining and its literary standards were high. The credit for this should be given to the editor-in-chief throughout the years, Ferenc Herczeg, who thanks to his great organisational talents was able to attract the most popular, contemporary prose writers to his periodical. Mór Jókai, Kálmán Mikszáth (1847-1910), Géza Gárdonyi (1863-1922), Jenő Heltai (1871-1957), Sándor Bródy (1863-1924), Gyula Krúdy (1878-1933) and Dezső Szomory (1869-1944) all wrote for *Uj Idők*. Many of their prose works were published here, mostly in serial form. As for the periodical's political profile, it was consistently staunchly conservative throughout its fifty years of existence.

The report of Brandes' visit was published on 8 April. The article is relatively short and the tone is very positive and approving. "The distinguished guest", writes the author of the article, "was received in the Hungarian capital with great sympathy."[64] The public had been very eager to hear his views on Hungarian literature and on the country's cultural and political condition. It would appear that he was regarded not only as a mediator of literature (especially Scandinavian) but also as a kind of 'cultural arbitor', whose verdict was awaited with curiosity.

Georg Brandes in March 1900. This photograph was taken during his stay in the Hungarian capital. Brandes adopts a pleasing, harmonious posture. He himself liked the picture, which was taken by Sándor Strelisky, the court photographer.

> [Brandes] gave a lecture on the giant of Scandinavian literature, but what we found even more interesting were his pronouncements on Hungarian literature. He was somewhat sparing in his acknowledgements but said that he had hitherto only read about our country, our people and our literary and artistic life in sources that were not marked by any warmth of feeling towards them. Now Brandes has come to look for the truth.[65]

With this optimistic sentence, *Uj Idők* passed the baton to Brandes, who was 'interviewed' for *Budapesti Napló* at the end of his visit by his acquaintance, Vilmos Huszár.

Herczeg's periodical was an illustrated magazine, and the editor made sure that a photograph accompanied the article. Brandes, who throughout his life was critical of and sensitive to the various likenesses with which he was presented, was very pleased with the Hungarian photographer's achievement. The picture shows a thoughtful, contemplative Brandes, one hand supporting his head and the other resting on one of the many books that always surrounded him. As he admitted to Vera Spasskaja:

> All pictures of me are bad. My face is too unsettled. The only good one is the picture from Budapest.[66]

The other leading periodical, *A Hét*, had no photograph; in fact, it adopted a very different approach. With Brandes' visit to Budapest and his lecture in the capital as his point of departure, the author of the article had an opportunity to give an assessment of contemporary Hungarian critics. He castigates the usual tone of reviews, accusing them of being "Balkan"[67] in their tactlessness and full of "café-gossip".[68] The Hungarian critics tend to reject anything that they cannot immediately understand. "A certain group of critics discuss modern writers and artists as though they were secret agents or charlatans."[69] In the opposite camp to this tendentious circle of critics are the serious literary critics who are inclined to accuse "this Danish scholar, who is neither a systematist nor a determinist like Taine ... of possessing only a semi-scientific intellect."[70] The author of the article tries to give a brief sketch of the different views of genius held by Brandes and Taine. In Taine's view, he writes, the artist of genius merely records the thoughts of his age and his race, whereas Brandes maintains that genius is itself instrumental in creating the new ideas that gradually influence the age and the masses. "Brandes spreads the gospel of genius ... Like Nietzsche, he dismisses the idea that genius is the expression of the cultural level of a

nation. It is not the spirit of the age that fertilises the creative artist, it is the artist who fertilises his age."[71] Brandes regards Ibsen as a greater artist than Hauptmann and places Maupassant higher than Zola. In this page-long article the author ranges far and wide. He certainly seems to have done his homework. His conclusion is a very practical one; he recommends a thorough study of the works of Brandes to the Hungarian critics.

A Hét, the periodical in which this article appeared, was founded at the same time as *Élet*, but unlike *Élet*, which did not last long, *A Hét* went on to become one of the most important and long-lasting of all Hungarian periodicals. It was started by József Kiss (1843-1921), the first acknowledged Jewish poet in Hungary. The origins of the periodical and its success were based on urban culture. It was primarily the taste of the capital's bourgeois intellectuals that was reflected in the magazine, not only in the sphere of literature but also in the spheres of politics, society, art and criticism. The magazine's particular political leanings were reflected in its broad, international horizons; in other words, its orientation towards Europe was of central importance to the magazine. The most significant poets of the age were contributors to *A Hét*, even the nationalist-conservative ones.

In both the above-mentioned periodicals, although they belonged to opposing political camps, Brandes' visit was reported favourably. Reviewers, that special group of recipients, heard Brandes' lecture and considered how they might put what they heard to the service of the nation. It was a question of turning the visit of the Danish critic into something topical. Among other things, they could use Brandes as an arbitor of taste, and recommmended his critical practice as a model for emulation. It is typical of the reception in 1900 that instead of dissecting the contents of the lecture, they tried to relate it to Hungarian conditions. The reviewers regarded Brandes' visit and his lecture as an important cultural event for Hungary. On this, both periodicals were in agreement, despite their different political standpoints.

The personal contact strengthened Brandes' position in the Hungarian speaking world. Dr Huszár published an interview with him in *Budapesti Napló*. However, the 'interview' was purely a figment of Huszár's imagination. In a letter to Brandes he admits this:

> Ich schrieb über Sie einen Artikel in *Budapesti Napló* (B-er Tagblatt), in welchem ich besonders darauf Gewicht legte: zu beweisen, dass viele unrichtige, irrtümliche und falsche Gerüchte über ihre Person und Thätigkeit cirkulieren wie Sie es mir selbst sagten. Glauben Sie mir, liebster Herr Brandes, dass der Artikel nicht sehr dumm war.[72]

In the assumed persona of Brandes, he writes:

> Unfortunately, I know very little about your conditions. What do I know about Hungarian literature? Some years ago, I received a biography of Petőfi, after which I bought a copy of his poems in German translation. I felt that I was in contact with a great poet but could not be certain. Lyrical poetry in translation is like overboiled violets (wie gekochte Veilchen) ... But I was absolutely delighted to see that Jens Peter Jacobsen's "Marie Grubbe" had been translated into Hungarian, as well as Ibsen and Knut Hamsun. The translation of Jacobsen pleased me most. Every single one of my poor friend's lines was created before my own eyes. I hear that Ibsen is being performed at the Kisfaludy Theatre, on one of the free stages. It is a very interesting experiment ... By and large, I am pleasantly surprised by your freedom. Everywhere I see debating societies, theatres and libraries accessible to all who can make the effort to use them.[73]

Brandes' lecture tour of Hungary also caused reverberations in the foreign press. Here, however, the tone was clearly negative. The German-language press, in particular, did not conceal its displeasure at Brandes' introductionary words to the Ibsen lecture, openly acknowledging his aversion to the German language. This had admittedly been rather tactless of Brandes, considering that Berlin had been his second home for over five years, from 1877 to 1883. Furthermore, the German media regarded Brandes' introductory words as a cheap way of gaining popularity with the Hungarians. Brandes' disloyal words about the German language did, in fact, provoke a very favourable response from the Hungarian recipients.

Brandes became sick and tired of the attacks in the press. With an undercurrent of bitterness, he tells his new female admirer, the actress Mari Jászai:

> Alle deutschen Blätter enthalten Schmäheartikel gegen mich. Ein Siebenbürgerblatt[74] hat mich angegriffen wegen meiner unschuldigen Einleitungsworte in Budapest, und nun heult die ganze Meute im Chor. Ich habe eine Antwort nach der Frankfurter Zeitung geschickt.[75] Eigentlich zu viel Ehre, aber die Dänen haben mich ohnehin mein Lebenlang gehasst, nun habe ich auch die Deutschen gegen mich.[76]

Nevertheless, the visit to Budapest is viewed very positively in Brandes' private correspondence. Before setting off for home he wrote to Miksa Falk,[77] the president of the Leopoldstad Casino, saying how much pleasure he had received from the visit:

> Indem ich Budapest verlasse, fühle ich das Bedürfnis, Ihnen meinen herzlichsten Dank auszudrücken für die Gelegenheit, die mir durch die gütige Einladung des Casinos geboten wurde. Ihre schöne Hauptstadt und deren gastfreundliche und liebenswürdige Bewohner kennen zu lernen.[78]

The same warm feelings were expressed in Brandes' farewell letter to Mrs Jászai. But what did the Hungarians think of Brandes brief visit? In the first instance, the personal contact with Brandes led to increased interest in his books. Sales in the bookshops rose to such a level that he received news of it from several places simultaneously. Even the Catholic-Conservative Péter Pázmány University bought his books for their library. The biggest success was his book on Shakespeare, but *Indtryk fra Polen* (Impressions of Poland), *Æstetiske Studier* (Aesthetic Studies) and *Moderne Geister* were also very popular. Quite apart from the works of Brandes, interest in Nordic literature began to grow. Naturally, translations of Scandinavian authors were already in existence by the turn of the century, but after Brandes' visit their number accelerated. In 1904, *Thália-Társaság* (the Thalia Society) was formed, whose purpose was to put on performances of modern plays on the model of the German *freie Bühne*. One of the founders of the society was the subsequently renowned literary critic and philosopher, György Lukács. In the first season, productions included Edvard Brandes' *Et Besøg* (A Visit). And during its four years of existence, the Thalia Society put on Strindberg's *The Father* and Ibsen's *The Master Builder*, *A Doll's House*, *The Wild Duck* and *Ghosts*. In many of the letters a recurring sentence provides a kind of 'summing-up' of the visit to Budapest: Brandes taught people to think; he was a marvellous teacher, who was able to present things in a totally new light and context.

Notes to Chapter 3:

1 Elza Szász to Georg Brandes, undated, Brandes Archive.

2 Béla G. Németh, *A magyar irodalomkritikai gondolkodás a pozitivizmus korában, op.cit.*, p. 184.

3 Gyula Haraszti, "Eszmék az irodalomtörténetírásról" (Thoughts on Literary History Writing), *Egyetemes Philologiai Közlöny*, 1880, 1, p. 52.

4 Georg Brandes, *Moderne Geister*, Frankfurt am Main 1882, reviewed by Károly Erdélyi, *ibid.*, 1886, 10, pp. 676-77.

5 *Ibid.*

6 *Ibid.* Cited from: Georg Brandes, *SS*, 2, p. 91.

7 "Georg Brandes: William Shakespeare. Paris 1896", *Budapesti Szemle*, 1897, No. 250, p. 325. Cited from: Georg Brandes, *SS*, 9, p. 268.

8 The Belgian writer and Shakespeare scholar Georges Eekhoud used the Austrian version for his translation. See Georg Brandes, *Les sonettes de Shakespeare*, MS., Archives et Musée de la Littérature, Bibliotèque Royale, Albert Ier, Bruxelles.

9 József Vészi (1858-1940), author and journalist. From 1877-93 he was attached to *Pester Lloyd*, from 1894 editor-in-chief of *Pesti Napló* (Pest Daily News). He started *Budapesti Napló* (Budapest Daily News) in 1896. In 1905 he founded the periodical *Jung-Ungarn* in Berlin; on his return to Budapest, he began working again for *Pester Lloyd*. He was its editor-in-chief for almost thirty years.

10 Georg Brandes, "Lear király", *Pesti Napló*, 11.11. 1894, pp. 3-5. The text is compiled from: George Brandes, *SS*, Chapters 25 and 26, pp. 523-35.

11 Jørgen Knudsen, *Georg Brandes. I modsigelsens tegn, op.cit.*, pp. 306-7.

12 József Vészi, "Mai tárcánk írója" (author of today's leading feature article), *Pesti Napló*, 11.11. 1894, p. 2.

13 József Vészi to Georg Brandes, 11.11. 1894, Brandes Archive.

14 Georg Brandes to Louise Magnus née Fürstenberg, 12.8. 1881, Brandes Archive.

15 The author and publisher József Fekete studied at the universities of Berlin and Leipzig. In 1884 he founded the periodical *Magyar Salon* (Hungarian Salon).

16 József Fekete to Georg Brandes, 23.6. 1894, Brandes Archive; József Fekete to Viktor Rydberg, 26.6. 1894, L 40:5, KBS.

17 Zsombor Szász to Georg Brandes, 29.3. 1895, Brandes Archive.

18 Zsombor Szász to Georg Brandes, 20.1. 1896, Brandes Archive.

19 Georg Brandes to Louise Magnus née Fürstenberg, *op.cit.*

20 Zsigmond Bodnár, *A magyar irodalom története*, 1-3, Budapest 1891-93.

21 Zsigmond Bodnár to Georg Brandes, 21.10. 1893, Brandes Archive.

22 Béla Lázár to Georg Brandes, undated (presumably the summer of 1894), Brandes Archive.

23 Doris R. Asmundsson says in her book, *Georg Brandes. Aristocratic Radical*, 1981, that Brandes only began to write his Shakespeare monograph in December 1894.

24 Charlotte Stieglitz (1806-34), wife of the poet Heinrich S. She committed suicide in the hope that this violent act would rekindle her husband's poetical talents. She is portrayed by Brandes in *Det unge Tyskland* (Young Germany), *SS*, 6, pp. 589ff.

25 Béla Lázár, *Irók és müvészek között* (Among Writers and Artists), Budapest 1918, p. 48.

26 Georg Brandes to Béla Lázár, 6.7. [1894], Brandes Archive.

27 Günther Grimm, *Rezeptionsgeschichte*, Munich 1977, p. 157.

28 Vilmos Huszár to Georg Brandes, 31.3. 1898, Brandes Archive.

29 Vilmos Huszár to Georg Brandes, 14.7. 1898, Brandes Archive.

30 *Ibid.*

31 Georg Brandes to Vera Spasskaja, 5.12. 1898, Brandes Archive.

32 See *Correspondance*, *op.cit.*, 2, pp. 135-36.

33 Vilmos Huszár to Georg Brandes, 8.3. 1899, Brandes Archive.

34 Vilmos Huszár to Georg Brandes, 19.11. 1898, Brandes Archive.

35 *Ibid.*

36 *Correspondance*, *op.cit.*, 4. p. 266.

37 *Ibid.*, 2, p. 266.

38 Vilmos Huszár to Georg Brandes, 30.11. 1900, Brandes Archive.

39 Vilmos Huszár to Georg Brandes, 14.2. 1900, Brandes Archive.

40 See *Georg Brandes und Arthur Schnitzler*, ed. Kurt Bergel, Berkeley, California, 1956, p. 187.

41 Georg Brandes to Peter Kropotkin, *Correspondance de Georg Brandes*, *op.cit.*, 2, p. 168.

42 *Budapesti Napló*, 26.3. 1900, p. 1.

43 *Magyar Géniusz*, 27.3. 1900, pp. 216-18.

44 A. Kruglov, "Nabljudenija i zametki", *Ezhenedel'noje obozrenie*, No. 171, 1887, pp. 732-722. Cited from: *We and They*, *op.cit.*, p. 126.

45 *Ibid.*

46 John Lukács, *Budapest 1900. A Historical Portrait of a City & its Culture*, New York 1988, p. 187.

47 *Ibid.*

48 Georg Brandes, *Levned*, *op.cit.*, 3, p. 375. The title of Madách's play is given here as *The Comedy of Man*.

49 József Láng, "Jókai Mórné Nagy Bella emlékirata", *Irodalomtörténeti Közlemények*, 1975, 1, p. 366.

50 Georg Brandes to Mór Jókai, 31.3. 1900. OSzK, Fond V/78.

51 Georg Brandes, *SS*, 17, p. 173.

52 Brandes had to cancel the trip to the provinces, due to a new bout of the troublesome phlebitis.

53 Georg Brandes to Herman Cohen Brandes, 1.4. 1900, Brandes Archive.

54 Arthur Görgei (Görgey). Brandes' own choice of spelling has been used here.

55 George Brandes, *SS*, 17, p. 169.

56 *Ibid.*, p. 171.

57 *Ibid.*

58 Georg Brandes, "Ibsen Henrik", *Budapesti Napló*, 1.4. 1900, p. 3.

59 Zenon Ciesielski, "Brandes and Poland", *The Activist Critic*, *op.cit.*, p. 211.

60 Georg Brandes, "Ibsen Henrik", *op.cit.*

61 John Paulsen, *Erindringer* (Memoirs), Last Collection, Copenhagen 1905, pp. 87-88.

62 Vilmos Huszár to Georg Brandes, 11.5. 1900, Brandes Archive.

63 Ferenc Herczeg (1863-1954) was a member of the Kisfaludy Society, President of the Petőfi Society (1904-20), Vice President of the Hungarian Academy of Science (1945-46). A member of Parliament, he supported István Tisza's policies. From 1927 a member of the Upper House. A number of his novels have been translated into the main Western European languages.

64 "Brandes György", *Uj Idők*, 8.4. 1900.

65 *Ibid.*

66 Georg Brandes to Vera Spasskaja, 20.11. 1900, Brandes Archive.

67 M-r, "Brandes György", *A Hét*, 1900, 1, p. 202.

68 *Ibid.*

69 *Ibid.*

70 *Ibid.*

71 *Ibid.*

72 Vilmos Huszár to Georg Brandes, 20.4. 1900, Brandes Archive.

73 "Kritikai megjegyzés rólunk" (A Critical Comment about Us) *Budapesti Napló*, 30.3. 1900.

74 *Siebenbürgisch-Deutsches Tageblatt*, 7.4. 1900, published an

anonymous article, in which Brandes was strongly attacked. See Georg Brandes to Arthur Fitger, *Correspondance*, 3, *op.cit.*, p. 411.

75 *Frankfurter Zeitung*, around 18.4. 1900. See *Correspondance*, 4, *op.cit.*, p. 373.

76 Georg Brandes to Mari Jászai, Ostertag 1900, OSzK.

77 Miksa Falk (1828-1908), liberal politician, journalist, member of the Academy of Science. Editor-in-chief of *Pester Lloyd*. Companion and tutor to Queen Elisabeth of Hungary.

78 Georg Brandes to Miksa Falk, 1.4. 1900, OSzK, Fond IV. 124.

I will not stand by and watch the case for the emancipation of women, which I alone have promoted in Scandinavia, and for which I have fought alone for years, despite being attacked from all sides, being bungled by ignorant women.

Georg Brandes to Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson

CHAPTER 4

GEORG BRANDES AND THE WOMEN OF HUNGARY

The Fight for Equal Rights for the Women of Hungary

Towards the end of the last century, a wider section of the population participated in literary life than had previously been the case. The female part of the growing, Hungarian reading public was already becoming a force to be reckoned with. This group of readers, which had hitherto been more or less inarticulate, gradually became potential consumers of books and periodicals and came to exert increasing influence, directly or indirectly, on the kind of reading matter aimed at women. Several new periodicals appeared on the market in these years. The fact that *Képes Családi Lapok* (Illustrated Family Journals) was a complete financial success tells us something about the growth in the female reading public. Naturally, these family and women's magazines catered for a wide range of intellectual abilities. There was everything from traditional fashion magazines, with no cultural content whatsoever, to literary journals of the highest quality. *Ország-Világ* (Country and World), *Vasárnapi Ujság* (Sunday News) and *A Kor* (The Times) published various kinds of articles, translations, book reviews and contemporary Hungarian literature. The material was put together by editors and journalists with a keen interest in and knowledge of art, and these journals numbered women among their staff.

Women were no longer satisfied to be mere readers; they wanted to have a voice in public life as well. They began to participate in the dissemination of culture, as writers, poets, translators, actresses, etc. However, the road towards this cultural emancipation was long and difficult. The women of Hungary had to fight hard to achieve recognition in the intellectual sphere, and the struggle was not only against the patriarchal society but also against

their own self-image. That the latter struggle was not the least difficult one was in part due to the effects of a Catholic upbringing (52% of the population belonged to this denomination).[1] Many women grew up in an environment in which the traditional, feminine pattern of behaviour was the only conceivable *modus vivendi.*

To abandon their home and their customary duties seemed a very novel and daring thing to do. The presence of women in the literary arena should therefore be seen against the background of the advance of the bourgeoisie, which had an inbuilt liberal desire for emancipation. This appetite of Hungarian women for a more independent, active existence is in many ways comparable to the literary and personal process of individuation among "the women of the modern breakthrough" in Scandinavia.[2] But the situations were not completely parallel. In the fight for equality of the sexes, the Hungarians proceeded much more cautiously than their counterparts in Denmark, Sweden and Norway, where there were lively debates about the relationship between men and women. Most of the contemporary writers were involved in this "Great Nordic War about Sexual Morality",[3] as Elias Bredsdorff calls it, which was fought on both literary and journalistic fronts. In this campaign, Georg Brandes became famous, or notorious, as a supporter of equal rights for women and of their emancipation from patriarchal constraints.

The debate about the position of women in Hungary, if it can be called a debate, was conducted on completely different premises. Sexual matters were simply not discussed in official organs. On the rare occasions when the topic was mentioned, it was in connection with hygiene and was delicately phrased. Virginity was essential in young women who intended to marry, though that did not apply to young men. In this respect, Hungary adhered to exactly the same tradition of double standards concerning the erotic experience of men and women that was the accepted norm throughout the whole of Europe.

The women whom Brandes met during his visit to Budapest represented a modern form of feminism that had evolved over a long period of time and which required commitment from women, too. This new, active, independent type of woman was the product of a lengthy process of development, which could be traced back to the late 18th century, when the Empress Maria Theresia (1740-80) issued her famous decree on education, *Ratio Educationis*, which surprisingly contained instructions concerning the education of girls.[4] Here were the first green shoots of an emancipated, female intelligentsia. The following survey of the women's movement should give some idea of the course of this development.

In Hungary, the literature which argued the case for women in the fight for equal rights, like many of its counterparts elsewhere, took Stuart Mill's *The Subjection of Women* as its point of departure. It is intriguing to note that it was Brandes who translated that book into Danish. He regarded this action of his as a kind of starting signal for the Danish women's movement. He wrote to a female acquaintance:

> As you may know, it was I who, through my translation of Mill's book on the position of women, put the cause back on the agenda in Denmark after a long interval, and I have continually supported it in my writings.
>
> For many years, I was virtually the only person in the sphere of Danish literature to support the idea and had to endure those drawbacks that are a consequence of believing in an idea several years before it is adopted by others.

When the Danish Society of Women was established in 1871, it undoubtedly owed its origins to the translation of Mill's book in 1869.[5]

The Hungarian translation was made in 1876, and it immediately provoked both positive and negative reactions, which shows how influential the book was in Hungary, too. Several feminist writings were based on Mill's liberal, utilitarian approach to women, which advocated equal rights for both sexes in all areas of life: their right to education, their right to employment and their right to political and economic equality. Mill's Hungarian interpreters concluded that society could no longer ignore the problems inherent in the unequal distribution of rights between the sexes. This unfair treatment of women could not be explained by reference to natural law, it "was based solely on the might-is-right principle".[6] Apart from Mill, the French author and sociologist Ernest Legouvé (1807-1903) exerted the strongest influence. Like his British soulmate, he firmly believed that women should work on the same basis as men and should receive the same remuneration.[7]

It soon became clear, however, that the early feminist literature regarded the emancipation of women as primarily a 'cultural problem', which society could easily put right; it could be solved by one simple philanthropic act, namely the construction of a good programme of education for women. The patriarchal bias of the movement is unmistakable and yet the women received the proposals with open arms, since they viewed their own struggles for equal rights within a similar, narrow framework. A more radical plan

was proposed by a handful of progressive writers who followed the struggle for the emancipation of women in other countries through the foreign press. It was only natural that their concern should primarily be focused on women of their own class. For that reason, most of the writers who took part in the debate only wrote about the problems that confronted middle class women.

Developments in Hungarian society at the end of the 19th century led to a very important change in the way women lived. Economic decline forced the increasingly impoverished gentry away from their estates and they moved to the rapidly expanding capital city. This urban migration resulted in a reorganisation of traditional family life where the women were cut off from production (regardless of whether or not they had in fact previously participated). In the city, they had much less physical space in which to blossom, and this led to an interest in new kinds of duties. Life in the capital presented women with a wider choice of activities, of which charitable work proved to be an area which socially well-placed women could regard as a possible sphere of work. It was an area in which they could hold their own in an independent manner and gain external, organisational experience in something that could be called a 'pre-political' space. This kind of commitment outside the home formed an important aspect of women's liberation.

It was in the early 19th century that the question of women's access to education was seriously raised. The main argument in favour of this step was that the introduction of general education also guaranteed the spread of Hungarian culture. In multi-national Hungary, national and, for that matter, nationalistic interests played an important role. But it was not until the Dual Monarchy (1867) that a differentiated programme of education for women became a reality. In fact, women's right to higher education was still a purely theoretical question in the 1870s, the female half of the population was even excluded from upper secondary education. During the 1880s, the first upper secondary schools were established where women students could prepare for the exams that would qualify them for admission to the universities, and it was not until the 1890s that women were able to enter the universities, though even then not all faculties were open to them. But when it came to the practical application of their newly acquired education, even the most progressive writers involved in the debate consigned women to their natural sphere, i.e. the home. An ambiguous attitude could thus also be observed, in the most enlightened advocates of equal rights for women.

It must be emphasized, however, that a woman's right to education was regarded as an unquestionable human right. The women's unions gained a great deal of recognition for their work for the advancement of women's

education. It was mostly women from the higher social classes,[8] the gentry and the upper middle class,[9] who were prominent in the formation of these unions. Teachers' unions were especially well organised. Thus in 1885, the Maria Dorothea League was founded to protect the moral and economic interests of women teachers. It was actually *Nemzeti Nőnevelés* (National Education of Women), a periodical which had been founded five years previously, that prepared the ground for the creation of the League. Once the Maria Dorothea League had become a reality, this organ became its mouthpiece. It is worth noting that unlike other periodicals this one was written almost exclusively by women, namely by members of the union.

The modern approach of the Maria Dorothea League can be seen, for example, in the fact that it demanded the same education for girls as for boys in elementary schools. The League also devised a programme of work for technical schools, conscious of the importance of giving a technical education to those unmarried women who were forced to take on paid employment and support themselves. The Hungarian Women's Union took as its model for women's workshops those in Britain, Germany and Sweden. Working class women did a lot of work via *Országos Nőképző Egyesület* (National Union for the Education of Women), which had 84 branches by the turn of the century. In 1907, *Magyarországi Nőegyesületek Szövetsége* (The Confederation of Hungarian Women's Unions) succeeded in getting Parliament to set up a commission to look into educational policy. The Hungarian unions were by no means isolated; they established links with the international women's organisations and sent observers to women's conferences throughout Europe.[10]

At the time of the Dual Monarchy, the debate on sexual politics was marked by a traditional, patriarchal attitude towards women. The dominant image of women was still barely distinguishable from the romantic, idealised view of earlier ages. There was no doubt that it was primarily the so-called feminine virtues that were supposed to be implanted by education. Intellectual and physical activities were to remain the prerogative of the 'stronger sex'. Society decreed that a woman should demonstrate a firm moral stance, which would equip her to carry out her roles as wife and mother satisfactorily. The real purpose of education was to strengthen these roles. Since a lot of emphasis was placed on the upbringing of the next generation, it was thought desirable that the mother should be well-versed in her native tongue and in the history and literature of her country. The Hungarian woman was regarded simultaneously as mother and patriot.

The good citizen, warm-hearted mother and obedient housewife were the roles that the conservative press continued to advocate. A number of

women's magazines carried articles that made no attempt to hide the fact that they regarded the demand for equal rights as alien to the true nature of women:

> Such phrases as 'emancipation of women' provoke repulsion not only in most men but also in feminine members of the world of women, since the ideals expressed by the emancipated woman are a long way from women's original vocation.[11]

The fact that the debate about equal rights for women was conducted over a wide geographical area, and not just concentrated in the capital city, shows how central the problem was. But in spite of the positive results with respect to women's access to higher education, the intellectual woman still had to put up with posts that were inferior to those held by men. It is significant that two of the most progressive advocates of equal rights for women, Aladár Molnár (1839-81) and Aladár Friml (1864-1943), both of them pro-European pedagogues and sociologists, unanimously attacked Mill's thesis of the essential equality between the psyches of the two sexes. They maintained that while the man's will is constant, the woman's is subordinate to her feelings. The masculine psyche is based on objectivity, therefore he can raise himself above the intelligence level of a woman. These 'unassailable truths' cemented the view that there are two, eternally divided spheres of activity, one for women and one for men.[12] By this means the separate rights of the two sexes were maintained both within the family and in the public arena. In other words, the conservative camp tried to preserve the patriarchal view of women. Although Friml and Molnár both worked to advance women's equal right to education and employment and recognized their right to personal responsibility and authority in law, they deliberately put the brake on women's emancipation, as far as their role in public life was concerned. Even Janka Zirzen (1824-1904), the female pioneer in teacher training in Hungary, said that "a woman's vocation can be summed up in two distinguished titles: the wife of a citizen and the mother of a citizen".[13]

One of the most important moves towards achieving equality for women on the question of property, which was made during the first stage of women's emancipation, was a law from 1874 establishing the age of majority for a woman. It had gradually become an anachronism that women, irrespective of their age, were not allowed control of their own personal property before they married. The most important task for Hungarian feminism was to achieve legal and political equality. It was the most progressive strands of the bourgeoisie who, together with the radical

movements, were behind this effort. *Feminista Egyesület* (The Feminist Union) was established in 1904 by Róza Bédy-Schwimmer (1877-1948) and Vilma Glücklich (1872-1927). The fight for female suffrage was a new point on the agenda. In this struggle the feminist movement received the full backing of the Social Democratic women's movement, which in 1902 had 940 organised women workers (by 1905 the number had more than trebled to 3014).[14] There were particularly close links between these two women's groups on the question of votes for women and on the organisation of adult education in evening classes. In 1901 the radical *Társadalomtudományi Társaság* (The Society for Social Science) was founded, and it followed the struggle of women for equal rights with great sympathy.

Splits soon emerged, however, between the Social Democratic women's movement and the Christian Socialist groups. It was predictable that the feminists and the Christian Socialists would have conflicting ideals on the subject of women:

> The first group preached free love in a flaming, scarlet dress, the other promised eternal fidelity, kneeling before the altar in a white dress and a veil. Victory for the white dress is victory for the sanctity of the home and the protection of the family hearth, while victory for the scarlet dress is victory for egoism, which leads to the disintegration of society.[15]

This primitive symbolism tells its own story since, at an early stage, all liberal attitudes on the question of morality were linked to political views that were condemned by official opinion. Before long, free thought was automatically equated with atheism and free love. After the turn of the century, scarcely concealed anti-semitic undertones in the discussions on morality became discernible. Jørgen Knudsen has discovered that there was a similar linking of sexual liberation and Jewishness among the Danish public. He writes that the gossip in the 1870s about Brandes as "the depraved and ice-cold seducer" was connected with the fact that "the alarmed masses of the time" wished to make it clear "that the man was Jewish ... un-Danish, foreign and irrelevant ... I am convinced", says Knudsen, "that he single-handedly provoked an upsurge in anti-semitism in Denmark at the time".[16]

The Catholic Church not only opposed the women's movements, especially feminism, but deliberately attempted to restrict the fields of employment open to women. "The feminists have a vain hope that they will be able to open up all professions for women."[17] But what stands in the way, according to Károly Jordan, is the intellectual inferiority of women, which

manifests itself as "a lesser ability to think logically and to arrive at sound judgement than men have."[18] The Church supported women as far as their right to education was concerned, but maintained that even though a woman might need to have a profession, the profession in question should be one appropriate to the abilities of the 'weaker sex'. Feminine qualities ought to be reflected in feminine work. On the other hand, women were given the task of curbing the man's sexual drive:

> In that area where man's willpower is unable to tolerate any externally imposed restraints, God has given him a helper who can walk beside him with her more balanced nature. Thus the organic unity of society is revealed, with the creative powers and head invested in man and the reproductive extremities in women.[19]

In this way, theology tried to perpetuate the image of the lifegiving father and to underline the view that woman is naturally subordinate to man. Unlike the father, the mother has no "physical and psychological productivity and no social power".[20] The movement for the emancipation of women wished to destroy this patriarchal view of the world. As we can see, the Hungarian controversy about sexual morality was not exactly a quiet affair either.

The Hidden Debate about Morality

The question of equality, as far as sexual morality was concerned, remained unanswered. But the question was never really seriously raised! All discussion of this topic was via euphemistic expressions; women's emotions and ethical strength were ostensibly the subjects of discussion but the hidden agenda was sexual morality and the institution of marriage. Some idea of exactly how sensitive an issue it was and of how reluctant people were to discuss it can be found in the following excerpt from a bitter article in *Katholikus Szemle* (The Catholic Revue):

> It is not against the teachings of the Gospels for a woman to fight for her rights as a citizen. There is something disheartening, however, about this new type of woman. What is distressing is the moral aspect of emancipation ... for it is under cover of the latter that the thought of demanding equality in matters of morality has managed to sneak in.[21]

In Scandinavia, the polemical question of 'equality in matters of morality' was fiercely debated, both in fiction and in the newspaper columns, by two irreconcilable camps. One side demanded sexual abstinence in both sexes before marriage, a view which was put forward by Bjørnson in his play *En Handske* (A Glove) (1883). The Brandes wing, on the other hand, advocated the opposite of the so-called 'glove-morality', i.e. sexual freedom for both men and women.

The debate was much less open in Hungary. The Hungarian public made regular use of 'literary events' as opportunities for raising the question at a theoretical level. Reviews of books and plays were feverishly discussed in the theatre world, in literary salons and in university circles. And it was not only Hungarian reviews that were discussed. Of the German-language periodicals, *Freie Bühne für modernes Leben*, published by the theatrical society of the same name, took a particular interest in the cause of women. Sexual morality seemed to be a prominent theme both in the periodical itself and in the plays that made up the theatre's repertoire. This experimental, modern theatre, *Freie Bühne*, put on successful productions of Scandinavian and Russian plays. The first five productions included performances of Ibsen's *Ghosts*, Bjørnson's *A Glove* and Tolstoy's *The Power of Darkness*.[22] These sparked off heated debates in the columns of the periodical.

The editor, Otto Brahm, saw to it that Tolstoy's very controversial work, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, was reviewed too.[23]

That same year, Hungarians could read Brandes' article "Dyret i Mennesket" (The Animal in Human Beings) in *Neue freie Presse*.[24] In this article, Brandes discussed in detail those aspects of *The Kreutzer Sonata* that were concerned with sexual morality. As expected, he concluded that Tolstoy's demand for chastity was unnatural but that it "nevertheless, for all its defiance of nature, had its own Russian grandeur",[25] as Peter Ulf Møller, quoting Brandes, writes in his thesis, and he continues his quotation:

> Here, as in *Ghosts* and *A Glove*, the real subject matter is sexual purity and impurity; but there is a wilder, more passionate consistency in the great Russian's vision than in those of the Norwegians. In *Ghosts*, Ibsen had painted terrible consequences for the home and the next generation of men's thoughtlessness; Bjørnson had allowed a young woman to demand men's unconditional abstinence before marriage; it did not seem possible to make higher or further demands in that field. But Tolstoy, in true Russian fashion, goes the whole hog ... He revives the demand for men's purity before marriage, but adds to this a demand for so-called

purity within the marriage, a new departure.[26]

Brandes could not, of course, accept Tolstoy's moral preachings. According to him, erotic freedom for both men and women was "one of the battle cries of the age, rich in possibilities for the future".[27]

As far as the Hungarians were concerned, the appeal for chastity in both sexes was only of academic interest. This can be seen, for example, in a description of relations between the sexes in Budapest at the turn of the century, in which masculinity and virility were regarded as true manly qualities and "the supremacy of the male was unquestioned and unquestionable, sometimes to the detriment of feminine sensitivity".[28]

However, this patriarchal, masculine dominance did not prevent women from participating in public life or from going to the theatre. In the years between 1879 and 1910, a number of modern, candid plays were performed in Budapest; Bjørnestjerne Bjørnson's *Leonarda* (1879), Ibsen's *A Doll's House* (1889), *The Lady from the Sea* (1901), *Hedda Gabler* (1907), *Ghosts* (1909) and *Rosmersholm* (1910), Edvard Brandes' *A Visit* (1904) and Strindberg's *Miss Julie* (1910)[29] led to exchanges of views among the audiences, both in the press and at private parties. As expected, the theatrical experiences gave rise to many different opinions. Anonymous critics emerged who advocated the cause of women. These might well have been women writers who, like their Scandinavian sisters, wrote either under a pseudonym or anonymously.

The performance of *A Doll's House* provoked a particularly strong reaction in the Hungarian public. In the most puritan parts of the country the play had to be put on using Ibsen's alternative ending, where Nora does not leave home after all, in order to avoid stirring up trouble.

The dissolution of marriages was rendered a practical impossibility by the Catholic Church, and financial circumstances prevented many a woman from leaving the matrimonial home. A Hungarian woman who followed the example of Nora would automatically become a social outcast. The institution of marriage was protected with all available weapons. Between 1886 and 1890 there were only 1,049 divorces, approximately 0.8% of all marriages entered into, so it was a very exceptional measure. In line with the fight for the emancipation of women, however, this number increased sixfold; there were 6,081 divorces between 1906 and 1910.[30]

One of the moderate conservative periodicals, *Jelenkor* (The Present) saw the performance of Ibsen's work as a welcome opportunity to moralise:

> ...The Noras who break away from their husbands in the name of freedom ... and who go their own way in the hope of finding happiness, simply race off into perdition. Is this to be the fate of the Noras? This shows in what mistaken direction the emancipation of women can lead.[31]

In *Pesti Napló*, an anonymous writer accused Ibsen of having encouraged mothers to abandon their husbands, children and homes.[32] The progressive press, on the other hand, was quick to discover the social message in Ibsen's plays. One of the first Ibsen experts in Hungary, Béla Lázár, an admirer of Brandes, demonstrated in his analyses that unresolved social problems lurked beneath the surface of typical family conflicts and that Nora's fate went far beyond the tragedy of one particular woman:

> Nora's fate is the fate of modern woman. Society is the evil spirit which destroys the individuality of women. It is society that prevents women from developing into real women of flesh and blood ... They simply shrink and become lifeless dolls.[33]

In his comprehensive analysis of Ibsen's work, Ödön Wildner (1874-1944) praised the Norwegian playwright's modern attitude towards women very highly. In his plays, Ibsen shows that a woman is a *human being*, who needs her own identity and her independent life as an adult; she is more than just the mother of her children and the wife of her husband. Wildner concludes that Ibsen's female characters are in a state of transition between slavery and freedom. They follow the process of emancipation of the modern woman, who has to go through "a crisis-strewn period of transition before achieving a higher stage of development".[34]

The liberal periodicals, such as *Élet*, were enthusiastic participants in the debate. Even in the first year of its existence, *Élet* published two long, informative articles on "The Annual Meeting of Finnish Women's Organisations"[35] and "The Lives of Outstanding Women".[36] Both articles deal with Scandinavian conditions and the periodical's insight into the subject can be seen in the fact that it pays most attention to the work of Ellen Key, the Swedish author and activist for women's rights. The article also deals with Ragna Nielsen, a Norwegian, and Aurora Stjernwall, a Finnish-Swede, both of whom were deeply involved in the women's movement of their respective countries. Completely in keeping with its political agenda, the radical *Huszadik Század* (Twentieth Century) published a translation of Palline Bagger's account of the conditions of women in her native country,

Denmark,[37] and *Szabad Gondolat* (Free Thought) gave a summary of the International Women's Conference in Copenhagen.[38]

Hungarian women tried to keep abreast of sister organisations abroad. Fresh air was gradually let into the Biedermeier culture, the domestic chats developed into public debates. It is amongst these politically engaged women that Brandes' recipients should be sought. Several of them were aware of the position he had adopted in the Nordic debate on morality.[39]

Female Recipients of Brandes

As we have seen, there was widespread knowledge of Brandes' activities, not only because of the reviews in Hungarian periodicals but also because of what appeared in German and Austrian journals.

Moreover, the constant appearance of his name and of quotations from his writings, whenever the 'daring' problem plays of Ibsen were being discussed, played a not insignificant part in how Brandes' position in the debate on sexual politics was perceived. In *Budapesti Szemle* (The Budapest Revue) the reviewer thought that by referring to Brandes, the great authority, he had a solid foundation for his opinions. Almost triumphantly, he wrote to all anxious guardians of bourgeois morality: "When a Shakespeare specialist such as Brandes raises his pen to defend the reputation of Ibsen, the opponents should really keep their mouths shut."[40]

Similar statements helped create the impression that Brandes had a special understanding of the perspectives on sexual morality which *Ghosts*, *A Doll's House* etc. delineated and that he himself was a supporter of equal rights for both sexes. He was therefore regarded by the readers/recipients as the epitome of the emancipated individual who tended to attract and repel simultaneously. His thoughts on freedom had already made a stir in 1873 when his youthful work *Emigrant Literature* was introduced to the Hungarian public. That this work is important in a feminist context, too, is due to the fact that Brandes also advocates the cause of women in this work. In addition to its concern with "free thought and free humanity", the book considers a third concept of freedom, viz. "free passion".[41] Brandes puts a lot of effort into describing this aspect of freedom. He deliberately contrasts "thought" with "passion" - reason with emotion. Pil Dahlerup describes it as "the principle of reality and the principle of desire".[42] In Brandes' own version it is expressed as follows:

> In my description, I have as far as possible extracted from the emigrant literature the healthy parts or at least the works in which

> the reaction has not yet subjected itself to authorities, but represents the natural, legitimate assertion of emotions, the soul, passion and poetry, in contrast to cold reason, precise calculation and a literature tied down by rules and dead traditions.[43]

Here, "emotions, soul, passion and poetry" denote femininity, from which innovation will come to the rescue of the "literature tied down by rules and dead traditions". The largely negative male principle of reality is unfavourably compared with the feminine principle of desire. Brandes concludes that there is an inner connection between femininity and an instinctive desire for freedom. He provocatively includes a female author, Mme de Staël, in a long list of male authors in order to show that

> It is this woman whose figure dominates the entire group. Her writings contain everything that was legitimate and noble in the works of the Emigrants: the reactionary and the revolutionary tendencies which divide the various efforts and works of the other writers are drawn together in her works into one endeavour, which is neither reactionary nor revolutionary, but *reformatory*.[44]

In Mme de Staël, "consciousness, spirit, passion and will, active character"[45] are singled out as qualities that belong to "the new breed of women".[46] The same could be said of the Hungarian, female intelligentsia. This "new breed" of Hungarian women were certainly acquainted with Brandes' *Emigrant Literature*, as we know from letters between him and his women correspondents.[47] The book did not actually figure on the traditional list of accepted female reading, but in it the subject was presented in a lively way, with originality and a degree of daring, and it captivated the female reading public. The Romantic classics were suddenly seen in a new light, and in describing the natural passions Brandes deliberately introduced erotic overtones. There was an excitement in his account that strongly appealed to the imagination of his readers. His audiences experienced the same, strong radiance when they listened to his lectures. He had an 'electrifying' effect both as an author/lecturer and as a man.

He fascinated the Hungarian women recipients because he was a type of male rarely found in Hungary. He took them seriously, answered their letters, listened to what they had to say, advised them and encouraged them in their various artistic and cultural pursuits. But he did not forget that he was writing to women, usually beautiful women. In her thesis, Pil Dahlerup shows how Brandes would sometimes play the part of patriarchal critic,

sometimes that of the sexualised man in his dealings with Scandinavian women writers.[48] This dual attitude must also have been in evidence when Brandes visited Hungary and came face to face with his women readers. This was a by no means inconsiderable circle of well-informed, literary women who *themselves* took the initiative to become better acquainted with the distinguished Danish visitor.

This female reading public was no less knowledgeable about his writings and no less interested in Brandes as a person than the male public. They read him with sympathetic insight, commitment and a down-to-earth sense of reality. This can be seen clearly in the more than fifty surviving letters that form our source material for one important aspect of the history of Brandes' reception in Hungary: his reception seen from a gender-specific point of view. We must listen to these letters which, like old phonographic cylinders, have captured the voices of a bygone age. They are human documents that contain a great deal of information about the background to Brandes' reception.

Generally speaking, the period in question is the one from 1900 to 1907. It was between these years that the correspondence was at its liveliest and that most of the letters were written. The overriding criterion for selection has been the comprehensiveness of the exchanges of letters since connected series are of most value when examining reader reactions. If one tries to analyse the course of the reception in a historical past, however, one is often faced with the problem of having insufficient material. But there are three correspondents - Mari Jászai (1850-1922), Hedda Lenkei (1878-1924) and Elza Szász (1875-?) - whose correspondence with Brandes is interesting both from a quantitative and a qualitative point of view. The letters, which derive from one particular social milieu, viz. the bourgoisie and the gentry, give some insight into the world of these women. All three correspondents are representatives of the "new breed" of emancipated women. All three were creative artists, who succeeded in practising their vocations on a professional basis. All three played a role in the public cultural life of Hungary: Jászai and Lenkei were actresses, while Elza Szász was a writer. Admittedly, the 'space for expression' available to women lay within the confines of the male cultural institutions, but the stage and translation work were both forms of expression where women's creative urges could find an outlet without hindrance.

Like the men, the female intelligentsia tried to protest against traditionalism and hypocrisy. In this struggle Brandes was the undoubted leader, from whom many sought guidance and a form of spiritual awakening. Thus Mari Jászai wrote to Brandes as follows:

> Ich bete zu Ihnen, weil Sie der erste Lehrer sind, von dem ich wirklich gelernt habe ... Ihre Bücher sind mir aber wie dass gute Brot dass uns die herrliche Sonne gab![49]

Pil Dahlerup observes the same kind of ecstasy in the Scandinavian women writers. The parallels are particularly striking if one views the Hungarian example in the light of the correspondence between Amalie Skram and Brandes, where the young writer plays on Brandes' fatherly feelings for all she is worth.[50] Her letters reveal the same candid admiration for the critic and are laced with the same, generous slice of flattery as those of the Hungarian woman.

In *Det moderne gennembruds kvinder* (The Women of the Modern Breakthrough), Amalie Skram's attempts to achieve an intellectual rebirth via a father figure are attributed to a Pallas Athene complex.[51] This involved a voluntary placing of herself in a filial position, subordinate to Brandes' paternal authority. This same father-daughter, teacher-disciple relationship can be observed in the letters from the Hungarian women. The passage cited above uses certain formulations that also occur in Pil Dahlerup's material; for example, the grovelling admiration for the great master and the voluntary acceptance of a position of intellectual subordination. But this very subordination indicates that guidance and encouragement are required from the paternal authority figure. There are thus clear typological resemblances between the attitudes expressed in the Scandinavian and in the Hungarian source materials and which stem from certain socio-psychological traits that many women at the end of the last century had in common.

No literary critic can have been the focus of so much personal interest from women readers as Georg Brandes. His much discussed 'Don Juanism'[52] cannot be the sole reason for this. As the letters clearly reveal, it was often the women who took the initiative in these platonic or erotically tinged relationships, and Brandes had enough emotional reserves to enter into and sustain the relationships; in fact, he simply could not stop himself from doing so. This must be one reason why, over many years, he was able to correspond with women pen friends in Moscow, Warsaw, Prague, Budapest, etc. As Jørgen Knudsen eloquently puts it, Brandes was always so very generous, always ready to give freely from his own reserves.[53] But it must also be admitted that Brandes needed the admiration of these women. And as far as the Hungarian women intellectuals were concerned, contact with one of the great Europeans of the age was at the same time both a responsible act

and something of an aphrodisiac.

Elza Szász - Scandinavia's Hungarian Messenger

Among the Hungarian female recipients of Brandes, Elza Szász held a special position both with regard to Brandes and to Scandinavian literature in general, since she had a knowledge of Danish. We know that she was born in 1875. Her father, József Brandt (1838-1912) was a well-respected surgeon at the University Clinic in Kolozsvár, where he taught and carried out research. Elza Brandt grew up in a home dominated by a modern, scientific view of life. In 1898, when she was twenty-three, she married the lawyer and politician Zsombor Szász, and his great interest in Scandinavian conditions proved infectious. Scandinavia became their great, shared passion. After their wedding, the couple travelled abroad and among other places they visited Scandinavia, where they stayed for almost two years. As on previous visits undertaken by Szász, there was a scientific purpose behind this one. He was to study how the political systems functioned in the constitutional monarchies of Scandinavia.[54]

In order to gain a better understanding of each individual country, the couple stayed in Stockholm, Kristiania and Copenhagen. They learnt 'Scandinavian', and came into contact with many of the most important cultural personalities, including Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, Arne Garborg and, not least, Georg Brandes. In Stockholm Elza Szász met the feminist activist Ellen Key, whose work she greatly admired. The acquaintance soon developed into a warm, reciprocal friendship, and Ellen Key became Elza Szász' confidante, not only in personal matters but also on the subject of her experiences in the Scandinavian capitals. In one of her letters, Elza Szász told Ellen Key, who had been close to Brandes since 1893, about her visit to the famous Dane in Copenhagen:

> We have enjoyed ourselves so much on visits to both the Vedels and the Brandes. Everyone is so friendly and agreeable that I think they must be doing it for your sake! We visited the Vedels[55] on Friday evening and the Brandes' yesterday evening; they have done everything possible for us, and that includes Mrs Brandes. Dr Brandes took us to see Krøyer,[56] who is painting his portrait. We had to entertain him, he said, because it was so boring sitting being painted. Of course he only said this to give us the pleasure of seeing Krøyer's studio; and it was not we who entertained him; it was he who did the talking as only he can talk.[57]

It was also Ellen Key who put them in touch with Bjørnson and who made sure that the young couple were introduced into 'literary and political society' in Kristiania. Zsombor Szász dutifully explained the purpose of his visit to Norway and to Bjørnson:

> Seit den ersten Tagen von Mai bin ich hier, um Menschen und Litteratur, aber besonders die Union zu studieren. Ich glaube, ich habe schon die wichtigsten Quellen und Broschüren gelesen und meine schwedischen Freunde haben mir ihren Standpunkt erklärt. Ich will aber jedenfalls ein paar Tagen auch in Kristiania bleiben um auch von norwegischer Seite darüber zu hören, desto mehr, weil ich als ein Ungar, die norwegischen Aspirationen verstehe und auf demselben Standpunkte stehe.[58]

Szász was quick to spot the analogies between Norway and Hungary. In his opinion, the Austro-Hungarian monarchy had several things in common with the Union of Norway and Sweden. At the same time he was aware of Bjørnson's categorical condemnation of Hungarian nationalism. It was therefore with deep regret that he wrote:

> Wenn dieses ungarische Paar nur die Macht gehabt hätte Sie zu überzeugen, dass die Ungarn keine schlaue und unaufrichtige Nation sind![59]

However, he did not quite succeed in convincing Bjørnson of the Hungarians' good intentions. Some years later, in 1907, Bjørnson published a passionate article attacking the Hungarian government for its chauvinistic policies towards the Slovaks.[60]

In Norway, the couple went to see Arne Garborg, whose novel, *Trætte Mænd* (Tired Men) (1891), made a deep impression on Elza Szász. She was very interested in the language conflict and discussed the question of provincial dialect versus standard language with Garborg. They celebrated Christmas Day 1899 at Garborg's home in Hvalstad.[61]

The young travellers were not confined to literary circles, they also came into contact with people from the world of politics. Among others, Szász met Bredo of Morgenstierne (1851-1930), a member of the Council of State and a Government Economist, who had defied the ultra-conservative establishment at the university in 1876. As chairman of the Society of

Elza Szász, née Brandt. Like her husband, Zsombor Szász, Elza corresponded with Brandes. At his request, she sent a photograph of herself to the amorous Danish critic.

Students, he had provided a venue for Brandes when the academic college had formally refused to allow him to use the university rostrum.[62] From the evidence of the extant letters,[63] Szász received a great deal of useful information from the liberal statesman.

The circle in which Elza Szász moved consisted of politically active people, whose influence was to be of crucial importance to her later work as a journalist. She followed the debates about sexual equality with great interest and the close contact with Ellen Key meant that she was well-informed. With great enthusiasm she tells her Swedish friend:

> We now have a little daughter, who is to be called Irmeline Andrea. To begin with I was disappointed because I really wanted a son; but Zsombor believes that it is a greater project today to bring up a woman to be an Ellen Key (forgive me! This is not an empty compliment; you will understand that I would not say it if it were not so true that I simply *must* say it) than to bring up a man. And that is why Zsombor and I would like you to become our daughter's godmother (is that what it is called?).[64]

Her letter reveals a deep admiration not only for Ellen Key as a person, but also for her efforts on behalf of better education for children and on behalf of the cause of women. The visit to Scandinavia naturally drew her into the debate about sexual equality. Under the name 'Elza', she wrote an article about Ibsen's *A Doll's House*,[65] for she felt that she had to have her say in the Ibsen debate.

In 1907, Elza Szász started to work for the family magazine *A Kor* (The Epoch).[66] She was given a regular column, *A magyar nő otthonában* (In the Hungarian Woman's Home), in which she gave advice of a practical nature to women. She drew on her own knowledge of the world of female experience. Far from idealising the home in her articles, she wrote with candour and insight on topics that were steeped in conflict. Her criticisms of outdated social norms were delivered with a good dose of common sense. In her article about *Anyák iskolája* (School for Mothers), she writes:

> I do not know whether there were any young, unmarried girls among the hundreds of 'mothers' who attended the lecture (on motherhood)? My guess is that there were very few. I am mentioning this because in our society we tend to protect young girls so that they have no contact with what will later occupy their lives. We shield them from the thought of motherhood, thereby depriving

them of the responsibility that is bound up with it. In our society marriage is regarded as a social activity, like visiting heath resorts in summer or attending balls in winter, and not as one of the great milestones in a woman's development. But marriage does require preparation, one has to think about it and qualify oneself for it as for any other walk of life.[67]

When Elza was working as a journalist, the family had moved to the capital and her home on the prestigious Stefánia Avenue was the venue for a great many social events, which attracted many of the leading intellectuals, artists and politicians of the day. In 1905, Zsombor Szász was elected a member of the Hungarian parliament, and he was also a contributor to the periodical *Magyar Szemle* (Hungarian Revue), while Elza's literary activities gradually widened to include *con amore* translation work. It was not least here that her knowledge of Scandinavian languages proved useful. Her translations were published in such journals as *Hét*, *Uj Idők* and *Nyugat*. Translation from the original language must be regarded as pioneer work in an age when Scandinavian literature was usually translated via German. Elza Szász' journalistic articles appear in retrospect to be expressions of a bourgeois, moderate view of the situation of women. But in a male-dominated world, expressing one's views on these questions was a very praiseworthy thing to do.

In Copenhagen the Szász' got to know Brandes. On returning home in 1900 Elza began to correspond with the Danish critic. Although the letters from Brandes have not survived, her letters indicate that theirs was a friendly relationship, which seems to have been reciprocal. Her admiration for Brandes and her enthusiasm for Scandinavian literature radiate from her writing:

> Do you really think it so amazing that my husband and I should love you? Are you aware that there are three men in the whole world whom we admire with the white hot enthusiasm that can transform you into a new person: Henrik Ibsen, J.P. Jacobsen and Georg Brandes? Do you not realize that there is not a single word that you have written, in Politiken or elsewhere that we have not read, and that has not played its part in what we have become, in what we are?[68]

This "white hot enthusiasm" for Brandes and the idea that he can transform his female admirer into a new person is in line with the way other

young women viewed the critic. His power to inspire is often shown through symbols, and the same symbol of the sun appears in the letters of several female correspondents, for whom he became the great 'luminary'.[69]

> You occupy a large place in our hearts! I firmly believe this, for what would the sun shine on if all the flowers that its heat has caused to germinate stayed humbly in the earth and did not sprout.[70]

This is how Elza Szász saw Brandes. His 'warmth' had made her germinate, in a spiritual sense. His encouragement gave powers of growth to her literary activities. In the letters, Brandes is endowed with almost divine qualities, so that even when she is talking of Brandes the human being, one begins to wonder whether he really *was* an ordinary mortal.

> It is one of the most beautiful, most wonderful memories of our life that you allowed us to be close to you and get to know you as a human being. Just think what it must have meant to us when you came down to us and were charmingly friendly and helpful and kind and simple as though you were a mere mortal just like us.[71]

With her female intuition, Elza Szász was clearly aware of Brandes' well-known delight in beautiful women. There are many references to his weakness for women. But she places herself at a coquettish distance from all this: "A charmeur is allowed to forget his male and female admirers, it will never cause him to be forgotten,"[72] she writes to him. When Brandes arrived in Hungary in 1907, she addressed him in her usual, spontaneous, candid style:

> I know that you will be torn to pieces by your admirers and I am writing early because I want to make sure of getting the biggest piece. I will try to assemble a pleasant company for you and some nice women, for you like them, don't you?[73]

She went ahead with the arrangements for the party, to which she invited "artists, writers, politicians and a number of pretty women, who are crazy about you, but not as much as I am, for that would be impossible."[74] So she remembered the female bait, but did not forget to declare the degree of her own captivation.

It should be noted of the relationship between Elza Szász and Brandes

that she did not adopt the typical 'daughter role' in her dealings with him. With enviable self-confidence, she wrote to inform Brandes of her completed plans for a social evening to be given in his honour during his visit in 1907. Clever hostess that she was, she made sure that Brandes would be happy and that he would be given the opportunity to meet the most prominent representatives of Hungarian cultural life. From this point of view, therefore, the correspondence between Brandes and Szász seems to indicate that the relationship was a friendship between two independent individuals.

Nevertheless, the letters often reveal a note of sexual tension. "You remember how beautiful I was?" writes Elza Szász, quoting Brandes. "Then I don't think I will send you a portrait of myself; I will let your imagination have 'freien Lauf'."[75] But she did send her photograph to Brandes and shamelessly asked for one of him in return:

> If I said that I do not lightly give away pictures of myself and that when I promised you one, it was with a Shylockian motive? If I told you that I was jealous of my husband every time I look at his desk and see a photograph inscribed "think kindly of me", would you punish me with silence, the most horrible way of being honest? I will wait, in fear and trembling, but will you be able to bring yourself to punish me?! ... I have written on the photograph in French; I dare not write anything in Danish, because my Danish is not good enough, and I refuse to write in German because I am Hungarian.[76]

Egotism and quick-wittedness were the hallmarks of Elza Szász. She was a full-blooded example of the kind of emancipated woman who tried to combine the traditional, domestic vocation of women with professional work in the outside world. It says something of Elza Szász' place in Hungarian cultural life that it was she who put the literary Petőfi Society in touch with Brandes during his visit to Budapest in 1907. But we will return to that later.

Jászai and her "Great Master"

Towards the end of March 1900, Georg Brandes met Mari Jászai at a reception after a performance at *Vigszinház* (The Comedy Theatre). The reception was arranged in honour of Brandes and the famous actress was introduced to him by their mutual friend, Vilmos Huszár. By 1900, the fifty-year-old Mari Jászai was already a legend in Hungarian cultural circles. She was the celebrated *tragedienne*, who in the course of her career had played

virtually all the great, classical heroines at the Hungarian National Theatre. To the Hungarian public, she was a real *grande dame*, and theatre reviews reveal that her fame had spread to Austria and Germany; her talent was compared to that of Sarah Bernhardt, Eleanora Duse and Charlotte Wolters.

The story of Mari Jászai's life resembles that of the ugly duckling. She was born in 1850, the youngest child of a village carpenter, and her childhood was spent in extreme poverty.[77] But even these depressing conditions could not break her resolve to go on the stage. She had a natural talent and never lost her artistic spontaneity. When she was sixteen, she could not resist temptation any longer; she ran away from home to join a company of strolling players. Later, disappointed, she left this life of drudgery and headed for the capital city, where she found work as a chorus girl in *Budai Népszinház* (Buda People's Theatre).[78]

Her very first, brief performance attracted the attention of the critics and at the age of eighteen, with no formal training, she was given the part of Queen Margaret in *Richard III*. It was the first time she had played a queen: that monumental, tragic, matriarchal role that was to be identified with her later career.

After Buda, she went on to Kolozsvár, the second largest cultural centre in Hungary, where she was taken on at the Hungarian National Theatre, which had opened in 1792. It was here that she first played her most celebrated part, that of Queen Gertrudis in the national drama, *Bánk bán*, by József Katona (1791-1830). Finally, in 1872, she was given the contract she had always wanted: she joined the National Theatre in the capital.

Before long, Jászai became the leading star of the theatre. She played Hippolyta in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Cleopatra in *Antony and Cleopatra*, Goneril in *King Lear*, and Portia in *The Merchant of Venice*. Thus she was given leading roles in all the Shakespeare plays in the repertoire, but her interest in Shakespeare went beyond her roles on stage. She read books about the English dramatist, studied the texts in the original language and even wrote an essay on the personality of Lady Macbeth.[79] One of her greatest roles was that of Eva in Imre Madách's *The Tragedy of Man*, and Jászai also received wide acclaim for her interpretation of the great female roles of Greek tragedy: Medea, Phaedra and Electra. The last-mentioned was something of a box office success in Budapest: more than fifty performances were put on.[80]

She became a life member of the National Theatre and was offered a job teaching drama at the newly-established Academy of Dramatic Art. At the turn of the century, however, Jászai felt that she was being side-tracked. This was because the theatre had gradually changed its repertoire. Instead of the

great, classical tragedies, lighter plays were now being performed, which could provide entertainment for the bourgeoisie, who made up the new breed of wealthy theatregoers. For a short time, she left the National Theatre and moved to the *Vigszinház*,[81] in the very year that Brandes visited Budapest. But Jászai's artistic temperament was not suited to acting in modern plays set in ordinary sitting-rooms; she had regal stature.

From a career point of view, the years after 1900 were difficult and possibly a time of disillusionment; she suddenly began to have doubts about her talent. To the public, though, she was still the great, national actress, to be worshipped. It was this 'role' that gave her access to the *beau monde* of Budapest. In this closed circle, where everyone knew everyone else, the Hungarian *tragedienne* met Brandes at several social gatherings. She had a strong personality and a passionate nature, and was rather a lone wolf, daring and unconventional. She was the first, nationally famous actress not to use her married name as her stage name.[82] On the whole, she had many modern views on the condition of women. To her, body and soul were indivisibly united and in her relations with the opposite sex, she put into practice this ideal of the 'whole person'. Her life as an artist provided the necessary freedom that other women often had to do without. She was not really beautiful, but her radiance attracted a lot of attention and was highly praised.

In spite of this, she was haunted throughout her life by a feeling of intellectual inferiority, and this is one reason why she was so fascinated by the 'great men' of the age: the sensitive poet, Gyula Reviczky (1855-89);[83] the painter, Arpád Feszty (1856-1914); the playwright, Dezső Szomory; and the critic, Pál Gyulai (1826-1909). These close friends from the world of art acted as her guides in a *terra incognita* of aesthetics, literature, music and history. But she also made a great personal effort to make up for what she had missed: she learnt foreign languages, read books, studied drama criticism and wrote a number of essays on subjects that caught her interest.

When she got hold of Brandes book on Shakespeare in 1900, she was absolutely enthralled. The book's sharp analyses of individual plays and the many precise observations interested her because she herself had been taken up with the subject. There is no doubt at all that Brandes the critic suddenly became just as fascinating a figure to her as the Hungarian aesthetes were. The book on Shakespeare became a kind of link that connected Jászai with Brandes. She consciously projected her intellectual ecstasy onto the person behind the book:

Mari Jászai in the part of Queen Gertrudis in József Katona's national drama Bánk Bán.

> Während diesen Sommer, Ihr Shakespeare lesend, habe ich etliche Mahl ein nachgefühl von Ihrer Gegenwart gehabt. Als wenn ich Sie selbst sprechen gehört hätte! Ich habe oft, als ich mit Ihr herrliches Buch, in der Stille, allein gewesen, habe oft unwillkürlich aufgeblickt um Ihnen in die Augen zu schauen. Hundertmahl habe ich das liebe Buch zu meinem Gesicht gedrückt, aus Dankbarkeit, und heiss geküsst![84]

To Jászai, Brandes' personality and his work were one indivisible whole, and since she 'read him' intellectually and sensually at the same time, some remarkable transpositions between the author and the work soon appeared. The latter almost became a substitute for the author himself.

An underlying, deep infatuation with Brandes can be detected in Jászai's letters. The "great master" appears almost in an apotheosis:

> Sie sind mir Heilig folglich auch das, was von Ihnen kommt, und ich kann davon nicht reden. Ich fühle jetzt, dass ich vor Ihnen knie und hundert heisse Küsse auf Ihre Hände und Füsse ... Ich fühle ein grosses, bitteres Leiden in mein Brust. Die Tränen wollen mich ersticken. Ich bin, ich fühle mich so enorm unglücklich. Ja, ich weiss, es vergeht, aber Sie sollen es wissen, dass es da ist. Ich fühle als ob man mir ein schönes Licht von oben mein Kopf weggenommen hätte, mit Ihrem Abschied.[85]

The dynamics of the relationship between Jászai and Brandes follow the familiar pattern; she placed herself in a typical pupil position, as the disciple of the great Brandes. The division of roles into the dominant man and the pliant, receptive woman can be seen in the form of address used in the letters: "dear master", "great teacher", "lord and master", etc. But this view of Brandes, as we have seen, was not peculiar to Jászai; it was shared by most of the Scandinavian women writers. They willingly accepted his patriarchal attitude, and his indisputable position of power sprang from the patriarchal principle. However, this paternal attitude towards contemporary women writers was rather complicated and ambivalent. Sometimes he was their fatherly mentor, at other times the authoritarian judge.[86]

The conflicting psychological mechanisms of encouragement and disparagement were part of the patriarchal role. On the one hand he gave out fatherly advice, on the other hand he was brusquely dismissive:

> Wenn Sie Lust haben, können Sie ja immerhin versuchen, etwas von mir zu lesen. Es wird Sie langweilen, aber es ist sehr gesund sich zu langweilen. Besser ist es wenn Sie alles überspringen, was Sie langweilt, und nur ab und zu eine amusante Seite lesen. Das ist für Frauen die beste Art des Lesens.[87]

Predictably, Jászai protested at Brandes' denigrating remarks, but with her usual eagerness she tried to appear conciliatory:

> Natürlich habe ich noch vier andere Bücher von Ihnen, geliebter Meister, "Polen" habe ich noch vor Shakespeare gelesen, wie lebendig, klar ohne alle unerträgliche Sentimentalität, aber nach Shakespeare, verzeihen Sie Meister, habe ich mich noch nicht getraut ein anderes von Ihnen zu öffnen. Ich habe Sie für eine Zeit lang alle ausgeliehen "Moderne Geister" liesst jetzt Collega Gaál, zwei andere zwei Freudinnen. Ich lese noch einmahl Shakespeare.[88]

She herself took on the task of spreading knowledge of Brandes' works among her fellow actors. But her admiration for Brandes was often matched by a corresponding lack of self-esteem. This self-denigration, which is symptomatic of a father-daughter relationship, seems rather paradoxical in the otherwise very authoritative Jászai, who moreover was regarded as a national treasure at the time.

What she sought in Brandes was primarily the father figure and only secondly the lover. Her fascination was mainly with "the great teacher" in whose orbit of power she felt herself to have been spiritually reborn. She wanted a share of his intellectual dynamism. As with other women, in Scandinavia, Brandes became a 'Lucifer', a 'luminary' to the Hungarian actress:

> Ich bete zu Ihnen, weil Sie der erste Lehrer sind, von dem ich wirklich gelernt habe ... Ihre Bücher sind mir aber wie dass gute Brot dass uns die herrliche Sonne gab! Ich verstehe Sie auch so leicht, als würden Sie in meiner Mutter-Sprache zu mir reden ... Ich habe bereits die hälfte von Ihren Büchern, und lese Sie so, wie ich die Licht einsauge ... Das ich nach Licht, das ich nach Ihnen strebe, können Sie mir ja nicht verargen.[89]

Brandes was the master and Jászai the inferior 'famulus' who, by the very nature of things, was both vulnerable and, up to a point, at the mercy of 'the

master'. As she writes:

> Ich hätte mich, wirklich, nicht mehr getraut Ihnen zu schreiben, hätte ich nicht erfahren, dass Sie mein Schweigen bemerkt haben. Ihr Brief war nämlich nicht zur Antwort auffordernd. Im gegenteil. Ich habe daraus gelesen dass ich Sie mit meine Briefe belästige. Ich kam mir vor, als ein grosser, undressirter Hund, der seinen erkannten Herrn umspringt, bellt und schleckt. Der aber anderes zu tun hat als ihn zu streicheln.[90]

Jászai tried again and again to describe her relationship with Brandes, and to explain the nature of this relationship, which was not without its latent, sexual undertones, but it is quite clear from the replies and from Jászai's own feedback that these attempts were one-sided:

> Um Gotteswillen verstehen Sie mich ja nicht falsch! Ich bin nicht verliebt. Nicht darum, weil das lächerlich wäre - aber - ich bin es nicht; und doch habe ich heute nur einen einzigen Wunsch mit Ihnen Herr Brandes, zusammen zu sein. Ich fühle, ich könnte für immer ihre, Sie anbetende Freundin sein, die Ihnen aber nie lästig sein würde. Ich bete Sie an. Ich habe das Gefühl, Sie in meine Arme zu nehmen, zu mein Herz drücken, und im Zimmer herumtragen, und herumwiegen, und warm anhauchen, und leise Lieder summen, dass Sie kein Leid mehr fühlen sollen.[91]

Brandes clearly rejected these overtures, in a patronising, fatherly tone of voice:

> Es ist sehr gütig von Ihnen dass Sie meinen, etwas an mir zu haben. Ich begreife es nicht recht, gesteh ich. Ich bin nichts als ein kranker Mann ... Und vergessen Sie mich so bald wie möglich, es macht keinen Spass, sich meiner zu erinnern.[92]

Jászai held nothing back in her letters, which reflected her current state of mind, like a mirror. With great dynamism, she exposed her feelings and thoughts, which accounts for the somewhat exalted style of her letters. There was a certain resemblance between her psychological condition while performing on the stage and when she was writing her letters, in that both activities transported her into a state of ecstasy. The actual correspondence with Brandes was a form of mental hygiene for Jászai. In short, she tried to

sort out many of her problems by taking up her pen. But frankness and unusual naturalness frequently carried her to the boundaries of what was permissible. Thus she told Brandes, after an acquaintance of only a week, about things of an extremely private nature, which even today would only be discussed within a close circle:

> Mein Mitfühlen, mit Ihrer Krankheit, können, selbst Sie mir nicht verbieten, obwohl ich Mitleid ebenso hasse als Sie. Ich habe Ihr widerwillen kennen gelernt, als ich im Spital zweimal operiert wurde, weil der gute Arzt mich geschont hat, und nicht auf einmahl meine Brust wegschnitt, sondern während zwei Jahre, mich zweimal in den grässlichen Schlaf narcotisiert hat, welches schlechter ist als zehn Tod. Ich sage das nur theurer Herr Brandes, dass Sie wissen, dass ich mich nichtmehr als Weib, sondern als Mensch, ohne Geschlecht betrachte.[93]

In her letters, Jászai also recorded the dark side of her career to Brandes, albeit not very explicitly. The bitterness creeps through her lines:

> Überhaupt die Rollen, die Bühne! Die Bühne passt nur bis man jung ist. Ich fühle mich schon längst Elend in mein Metier, muss aber thun, als wenn jetzt noch immer in den heiligen Rausch brannte als in meiner Kindheit. Mein Leben ist eine elende Lüge. Kann aber dis Bühne nicht lassen, denn ich lebe davon. Ich fühle mich nur vor der Wahrheit wohl, das ist die Ursache, dass ich mich vor Ihnen teurer Meister, bis zur Erde gebeugt habe.[94]

Generally speaking, the letters are mainly concerned with Jászai's private sphere and there are relatively few references to her public appearances in the correspondence. The same is true of Brandes. It is therefore something of a departure from the norm when Brandes tells Jászai about the attack on him published in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*,[95] after his 'innocent' comments about how he had been forced to choose German as the language of his lecture. Jászai did not respond to these remarks, because she did not really understand what it was all about. There was no room for any dark shades in her picture of the European celebrity.

To Mari Jászai, Brandes was "an alien source of energy", who kindled her interest in European currents of thought generally, and in Scandinavian literature in particular. Stimulated by Brandes, she translated Ibsen's *John Gabriel Borkman*.

What did Brandes think of his assigned roles of father, teacher and lover simultaneously? With a display of cynicism and condescension, he boasted of his great success with Jászai to a female acquaintance in Vienna:

> In Budapest gewann ich das Herz einer alten Tragédienne, die mir 3 Mal des Tages Blumen, und einen Abend vier Töpfe mit Rahm schickte. War das nicht schmeichelhaft? Leider gestand die Dame 44 Jahre, was auf 48 deutet. Die vier Töpfe Rahm kamen dem Hotelpersonal sehr zu Gute.[96]

Hedda Lenkei - "An elegant drawing by Leonardo"

When Brandes visited Budapest in 1900, Hedda Lenkei was 23 years old and a celebrated *prima donna* at the *Vigszinház*. It was here that Brandes first saw her and was captivated by her youth. It was flattering to be praised by "the greatest living author",[97] as she put it in her first letter to the Danish critic. She evidently realized what a celebrity Brandes was. The solemnity of the tone indicates that what she wrote was meant seriously:

> Ich kann nicht dem Wunsche widerstehen, einen tiefgefühlsten Dank auszusprechen für den Beifall, mit dem der grösste Schriftsteller der Jetztzeit, gestern Abend meine Wenigkeit ausgezeichnet. Dieser Beifall wird der Stolz und ein Ansporn meiner ganzen Laufbahn sein. Dank, Meister, von Herzen Dank...[98]

Hedvig (Hedda) Lenkei was married to Zoltán Bosnyák (1861-1948), a government official and later member of the Council of State, whose position secured her higher esteem in society than her career as an actress could have brought her. Furthermore, the fact that her husband was an enthusiastic reader and writer of literature was of great importance to her development. Bosnyák was regarded as an excellent playwright,[99] and his plays were among those put on at the National Theatre, with Hedda Lenkei usually playing the leading role in them. The couple also shared a common interest in charitable work on behalf of children. All legislation to do with the rights of orphans is linked to the name of Zoltán Bosnyák.[100]

By the standards of her age, Hedda Lenkei was an attractive woman, whom Brandes compared admiringly, in a letter to Mari Jászai, to "an elegant drawing by Leonardo".[101] In 1896 Lenkei went to the *Vigszinház* and in 1903 she was taken on at the National Theatre. She is especially remembered for her interpretations of Roxane in Rostand's *Cyrano de*

The actress Hedvig (Hedda) Lenkei was inspired by Brandes to immerse herself in the plays of Ibsen. She translated Hedda Gabler *and played the title role when the play was first performed. She sent this photograph to Brandes, together with the following words: "A small token of my gratitude and love. To my dear master, from Hedda Lenkei". Brandes was captivated by her facial features and compared her to "an elegant drawing by Leonardo".*

Bergerac, of Ibsen's Asta in *Little Eyolf* and of the title character in *Hedda Gabler*.

In the early stage of the correspondence between Lenkei and Brandes, between 1900 and 1906, her letters are characterized mainly by an 'attitude of admiration':

> Heute sende ich Ihnen liebster Meister meine herzlichsten Glückwünsche zu Ihrem, diese Woche gefeierten Geburtsfeste, empfangen Sie dieselben, wenn auch etwas verspätet ebenso gütig mit wie viel Freuden ich sie sende! In Gedanken bin ich seit Tagen immer bei Ihnen, ich nahm so innigen Antheil an der Freude der ganzen civilisierten Welt Sie feiern u. bewundern zu können![102]

In addition to the personal admiration felt for the recipient, the letter signals that Lenkei was perfectly aware of Brandes' reputation throughout "the entire civilized world". Thus she boldly asked Brandes to use his influence and give her a recommendation that the director of the Wiener Volkstheater would find irresistible. Brandes' word carried weight, but as she writes, "Auf Budapester Kritik gibt man in Wien nichts!"[103] On several occasions, Lenkei expressed her disgust with the provincialism that prevailed in Hungary, which she called "mein kleines Barbarenland":[104]

> Ja, ich trachte noch immer nach Wien, hier sind die Theaterverhältnisse so ekelig kleinlich und ungünstig, es ist nicht zu beschreiben.[105]

She also candidly recorded an involuntary break in her acting career, the theatre manager's punishment for changing her contract, and asked Brandes for new recommendations ("ich bin noch so jung, und die Ambition ist noch zu gross in mir!"). She successfully appealed both to Brandes' fatherly feelings and to his manliness by stressing her inexperience and her helplessness without his intervention. Brandes, who was always ready to help those in need, complied with her request. Time and again, though not without a certain amount of coquetry, Lenkei dismissed Brandes' flattering letters, which she felt she did not deserve:

> Sie dürfen mir nicht so schmeichelhafte Briefe schreiben ... ich verdiene es wirklich nicht, lieber Meister. Aber stolz bin ich doch darauf![106]

...

> Lieber Meister! Heute noch kann ich Ihnen nicht bestimmtes schreiben; dies war der Grund meines Schweigens und nicht Ihr zärtlicher Brief. Wie können Sie sich nur so was denken, Zärtlichkeit thut doch so wohl und dann die Hauptsache: von Ihnen![107]

Brandes' interest in Hedda Lenkei was not without its quasi-erotic side. She undoubtedly knew of Brandes' weakness for beautiful women. With a certain amount of sarcasm, she replies to a letter, in which he had apparently boasted of his conquests:

> Ich will Ihnen nicht zu Last fallen, darum antworte ich erst heute denn eine junge Frau bei sich in unmittelbarer Nähe zu haben dies kann eventuell sehr unterhaltend sein aber in brieflichem Verkehr zu stehen dies weniger! ... Dass Sie in Paris so manchen Roman erlebten will ich gerne glauben, nur denke ich, dass Paris nicht der einzige Ort ist.[108]

The letters indicate that Brandes had been trying to arrange a meeting with Lenkei for several years; the plans kept being frustrated, however, and the resigned remark, "Es wäre zu schön gewesen,"[109] crops up regularly in the letters. The feeling that she was unattainable nurtured Brandes' desire to cultivate the acquaintance of the young actress. And she responded to his approaches by admitting that she not only admired her great master, but that she was very fond of him.[110] Furthermore, she did not confine herself to following Brandes' progress and literary activities in the press, but also took an interest in everything to do with Danish literature and with Scandinavian literature in general:

> Vor ungefähr 10-12 Tagen reiste ich nach Wien und las da unterwegs in der Wiener Fr. Presse Ihre Festrede über Holger Drachmann. Ich war ganz allein im Coupé und so ganz bei Ihnen liebster Meister da nahm ich mir vor zu schreiben. Ich muss es thun![111]

We can observe in Lenkei the same powerful feeling which we experienced with Mari Jászai, namely that reading Brandes evokes Brandes as a person. In the same solemn tone of voice as Jászai, Hedda Lenkei relates how important a part Brandes has played in her intellectual development.

There is nothing new in this, since Brandes is seen in the role of "teacher and guide", as the one who taught women how to think and the one who awakened their "human consciousness". This recognition recurs constantly, in direct or indirect references, in most of the correspondence that Brandes conducted with women. It is noteworthy, however, that it was the personal contact with Brandes that inspired Lenkei's spiritual development. At the same time, it says something about the extent of Brandes' ability to influence people:

> Ich bin Ihnen ja so viel schuldig: Sie haben mich denken gelernt! Die eine Stunde, die ich damals bei Ihnen verbrachte, hat mich zu meinem menschlichen Bewusstsein gebracht ... Das Andenken dieser einer Stunde ist so tief, so unauslöslich, so vollkommen schön, dass ich daran ein Lebenlang zehren kann. Sie dürfen mich nicht auslachen, süsser Meister, vielleicht haben andere Menschen auch so tiefe Eindrücke im Leben, jedenfalls fühl' ich mich glücklich, dass es mir vergönnt war! ... Ich habe aber dem noch immer nicht entsagt, dass ich noch einmal bei Ihnen eine halbe Stunde verbringen darf, um Ihrem grossen Geist und Ihrer schönen Seele zu lauschen.[112]

This quotation emphasizes the deep impression Brandes could expect to make. But this strong infatuation could have positive effects, if one sees it in a wider context. It encouraged Hedda Lenkei to study Scandinavian literature, especially Ibsen. She gave on-the-spot commentaries on Ibsen productions in Hungary and deplored the public's poor understanding of the Norwegian dramatist and its negative attitude towards him. Her letters thus also throw some light on how Ibsen was received at the turn of the century. She is shocked at the public's reaction to *When We Dead Awaken*, which was performed in a suburban theatre and survived two performances: "...die Schauspieler wussten nicht, was sie sprachen und das Publikum verstand es nicht. Diese Fragezeichengesichter vergesse ich mein Leben lang nicht."[113]

Her letters show that she regarded herself as an expert on Ibsen. So great was her involvement that she began to translate *Hedda Gabler* from the original text. Every role in Ibsen's plays had its own particular importance for her: "...Es steht mir was Schönes bevor die 'Rebekka' in Rosmersholm,"[114] she proudly wrote to Brandes. This 'professional' fellowship inspired her to 'arrange' a new invitation to the critic. It is tempting to conclude that Brandes' second visit to Budapest was the work of his female recipients.

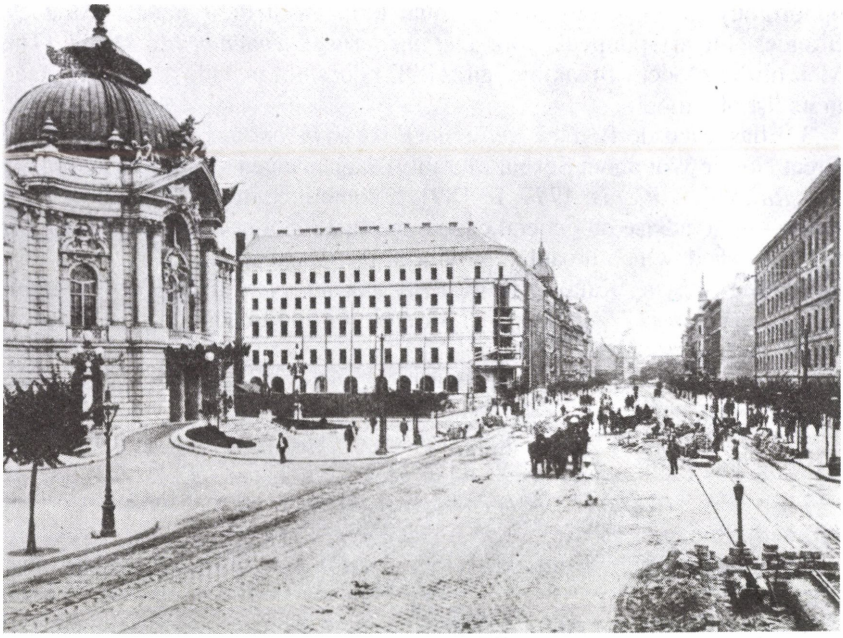
Despite certain differences, in social and educational background for example, and not least in temperament, the female recipients did share many common traits. And although the letters vary in tone from the fiercely passionate to social chit-chat and from the humorous to outbursts of pathos, they are essentially very similar. The admiration for Brandes is there in all of them. They 'used' him as an 'agony aunt' to whom they could pour out their innermost feelings. As a matter of fact, the Hungarian women were seldom turned away by the critic; on the contrary, he encouraged them as much as he could.

These women elevated him to the position of spiritual guide, inspiration and activator, and he served as a catalyst in the development of their consciousness and their self-awareness. The correspondence with Brandes was a confirmation of intellectual and sexual equality. The critic understood and sympathized with this, and when he wrote to the Szász' and the Bosnyáks, he always corresponded separately with each spouse.

What the female recipients most wanted was personal endorsement from the Danish critic. And since he was generous with his praise, he encouraged them to continue with their projects. The translation work was a concrete result of this encouragement.

Mari Jászai, Elza Szász and Hedda Lenkei all felt that through Brandes they were receiving a new consciousness, for which they all used the term "human consciousness". They also felt that they were experiencing a personal development that had wider consequences for their social and artistic activities. With great conviction they took up the cudgels for a more modern view of women, which is how Brandes became indirectly involved in the emancipation of Hungarian women.

It is perhaps debatable whether one can justifiably distinguish between separate male and female receptions, but there appear to be certain features, specific to one sex only, that would make this division seem reasonable. Brandes' reception in Hungary, at any rate, certainly points in that direction.



Vígszinház (The Comedy Theatre) on the Leopold Ring. Both Mari Jászai and Hedda Lenkei performed here in 1900, when Brandes visited in Budapest.

Notes to Chapter 4:

1 See Desider Zentay, *Ungarn im Spiegel der Statistik*, Budapest 1940, p. 26.

2 *Det moderne gennembruds kvinder* (The Women of the Modern Breakthrough) is the title of Pia Dahlerup's doctoral thesis from 1983, in which she introduces a number of Danish women writers who did not get the opportunity to break through on equal terms with their male colleagues. Brandes' literary-political work *Det moderne Gjennembruds Mænd* (The Men of the Modern Breakthrough) (1883) does not include a single woman in its list of writers.

3 Elias Bredsdorff, *Den store nordiske krig om seksualmoralen* (The Great Nordic War about Sexual Morality), Copenhagen 1973.

4 *Ratio Educationis*, 1777. In 1891, a committee of the Council of State was set up to advise on general education. In 1806 a new *Ratio Educationis* was published, which broadly reproduced the Empress Maria Theresa's own ideas. See Nagyné, Katalin Szegvári, *A nők müvelődési jogaiért folytatott harc hazánkban (1777-1918)* (The Struggle for the Education of Women in Our Country), Budapest 1969.

5 Georg Brandes to Ida Falbe-Hansen, 15.5. 1884, Ny Kongelig Samling (New Royal Collection).

6 J. Stuart Mill, *A nő alárendeltsége* (The Subjection of Women), translated by Dr József Egedi, Szatmár 1876, p. 17.

7 See Ernest Legouvé, *A nők erkölcsi története* (The Moral History of Women), Budapest 1881.

8 Countess Teréz Brunszvik (1775-1861), Baroness Lajos Batthyány, Baroness József Eötvös (the latter two both married to prominent, liberal politicians), Countess Albin Csáky, Baroness Amalia Egloffstein etc. all worked for the emancipation of women.

9 Mrs Pál Veres, née Hermin Beniczky, (1815-95) was the most important campaigner for the education of women.

10 See Nagyné, Katalin Szegvári, *op.cit.*, pp. 127ff.

11 Károly Szathmáry, "Nőemancipáció" (The Emancipation of Women), *Nők Lapja*, (Women's Magazine), Pest 1871, p. 97.

12 Aladár Friml, *Nem és hivatás* (Gender and Vocation), Pest 1867, pp. 10-12.

13 Mór Kármán, *Feminizmus és pedagógia*. Elnöki megnyitó. Tartotta a Magyar Pedagógiai Társaság XIV. közgyülésén Zirzen Janka emlékünnepének alkalmából (Feminism and Pedagogy. Chairman's opening speech at the 14th General Meeting of the Hungarian Pedagogical Society in

memory of Janka Zirzen's memorial), Budapest 1906. Cited from: Nagyné, Katalin Szegvári, *op.cit.*

14 See Zoltán Horváth, *Magyar Századforduló* (The Turn of the Century in Hungary), 1961, p. 140.

15 Sarolta Geötze, *Modern feminzmus*, Budapest 1908, pp. 2ff.

16 Jørgen Knudsen, "Skt. Georg og hans prinsesser" (St George and his Princesses), *Politiken*, 14.2. 1989.

17 Károly S. Jordan, *A Feminizmusról* (On Feminism), Budapest 1907, published by The Catholic Council for Education. Cited from: Nagyné, Katalin Szegvári, *op.cit.*, p. 186.

18 *Ibid.*

19 *Ibid.*

20 Pil Dahlerup, *Det moderne gennembruds kvinder*, *op.cit.*, p. 26.

21 Gyula Heténvi, "Régi és új utak a leánynevelésben" (Old and New Ways of Bringing Up Girls), *Katholikus Szemle*, 1918, p. 317.

22 Gernot Schley, *Die freie Bühne in Berlin*, Berlin 1967, pp. 38-65.

23 Ola Hansson, "Die Kreutzersonate von Tolstoi", *Freie Bühne für modernes Leben*, 1890, 1, pp. 423-26.

24 Georg Brandes, "Das Thier im Menschen", *Neue freie Presse*, September 1890 (not verified).

25 Peter Ulf Møller, *Efterspil til Kreutzersonaten* (Epilogue to the Kreutzer Sonata), Copenhagen 1983, p. 128.

26 Georg Brandes, *SS*, 7, p. 207.

27 Georg Brandes, *Det moderne Gjennembruds Mænd* (The Men of the Modern Breakthrough), Copenhagen 1883, p. 129.

28 John Lukács, *op.cit.*, p. 106.

29 The information about the Hungarian first nights of these plays comes from the archive at Szinházi Intézet, Budapest (The Hungarian Institute of Drama).

30 Desider Zentay, *op.cit.*, p. 35.

31 Ernő Salgó, "Nora és a Kaméliás hölgy" (Nora and La Dame aux camélias), *Jelenkor* (The Present), 1896, 34. Cited from: Anikó Balogh, "Norsk litteratur i Ungarn" (Norwegian Literature in Hungary), *Studia Philologia Moderna*, 1, 1984, p. 39.

32 (Zoltán Ambrus), "Nora", *Pesti Napló*, 1889, 275.

33 Béla Lázár, "Nora eredetije" (The Original Nora), *Magyar Hirlap* (Hungarian Times), 1891, 184.

34 Ödön Wildner, "Ibsen Henrik", *Huszadik Század* (Twentieth Century), 1900, 2, p. 180.

35 Alexandra Gripenberg, "Éjszaki levegő" (Nordic Air), *Élet*, 1890, 1,

pp. 102-8.

36 Ottmar Szinnyei, "Kiváló nők életéből" (On the Lives of Outstanding Women), *Élet*, 1890, 1, pp. 424-27.

37 Palline Bagger, "A Nők helyzete Dániában" (The Situation of Women in Denmark), *Huszadik Század*, 1914, 1, pp. 789-93.

38 János Horty, "Nők az osztályharcban" (Women in the Class Struggle), *Szabad Gondolat*, pp. 167-70.

39 The correspondence between Ellen Key, Georg Brandes and Elza Szász confirms this surmise. See also Doris R. Asmundsson, *Georg Brandes. Aristocratic Radical*, New York 1981, pp. 276-77.

40 (Lajos Korpf), "Henrik Ibsen. Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson." *Budapesti Szemle*, 1883, pp. 154-56.

41 See Pil Dahlerup, *op.cit.*, pp. 72ff.

42 *Ibid.*, p. 73.

43 Georg Brandes, *Emigrantlitteraturen* (Emigrant Literature), Copenhagen 1872, p. 225.

44 *Ibid.*, p. 226.

45 *Ibid.*, p. 120.

46 *Ibid.*

47 See the correspondence between Elza Szász and Georg Brandes.

48 Pil Dahlerup, *op.cit.*, p. 27.

49 Mari Jászai to Georg Brandes, 6.4. 1900, Brandes Archive.

50 Pil Dahlerup, *op.cit.*, p. 97.

51 *Ibid.*, pp. 97ff.

52 *Ibid.*, pp. 104ff.

53 Jørgen Knudsen, "Skt Georg og hans prinsesser", *op.cit.*

54 These studies resulted in a dissertation, *A norvég és svéd államkapcsolat története kezdettől napjainkig* (The History of the Union of Norway and Sweden from its Beginnings to the Present Day), Kolozsvár 1901; *A norvég democrátia* (Norwegian Democracy), Kolozsvár 1902.

55 Herman Vedel (1875-1948) Danish painter, who painted an impressive portrait of Brandes.

56 Peter Severin Krøyer (1851-1909), Danish painter.

57 Elza Szász to Ellen Key, 26.2. 1900, L 41:63, KBS.

58 Zsombor Szász to Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, 30.6. 1896, UB.

59 Zsombor Szász to Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, 4.12. 1899, UB.

60 Bjørnson supported the Slovaks after the introduction of Count Albert Apponyi's infamous Education Act. The debate was conducted in the columns of *Neue freie Presse* and *Morgenbladet*. See Josef Michl, "Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson und die Slowakei" (manuscript).

61 See the correspondence with Arne Garborg, letter collection no. 140, UB.

62 Edvard Beyer, "Mottakelsen av Georg Brandes i Norge ca 1870-84", *The Modern Breakthrough*, *op.cit.*, pp. 13-21.

63 See the correspondence with Bredo of Morgenstierne, letter collection no. 304, UB.

64 Elza Szász to Ellen Key, 15.3. 1902, KBS.

65 Elza (Szász), "Ibsen Norája", *Kolozsvári Hirlap* (Kolozsvár Daily), 1909 (not verified).

66 This periodical only lasted one year (1907-8). It had a number of female contributors, such as the gifted lyricist Minka Czóbel and the translator Emma Ritoók, to mention but the two most famous of them.

67 *A Kor*, 1907, p. 17.

68 Elza Szász to Georg Brandes, undated (presumably 1901), Brandes Archive.

69 Pil Dahlerup, *op.cit.*, pp. 93ff.

70 *Ibid.*

71 Elza Szász to Georg Brandes, undated (presumably 1904), Brandes Archive.

72 Elza Szász to Georg Brandes, 4.9. 1900, Brandes Archive.

73 Elza Szász to Georg Brandes, 2.2. 1907, Brandes Archive.

74 Elza Szász to Georg Brandes, 25.2. 1907, Brandes Archive.

75 *Ibid.*

76 Elza Szász to Georg Brandes, 4.9. 1900, Brandes Archive.

77 The information about Jászai's life is taken from Anna Földes, *Igy élt Jászai Mari* (How M.J. Lived), Budapest 1981; *Jászai Mari levelei* (M.J.'s Letters), ed. Sándor Kozocsa, Budapest 1944.

78 This theatre was opened in 1891 by the brilliant man of the theatre and drama critic György Molnár, who made good use of his experiences during his sojourns in Western Europe. His theatre was the cradle of some of Hungary's great actors.

79 *Jászai Mari irásai* (M.J.'s Writings), ed. Ferenc Debreceni, Budapest 1955.

80 The critics in Vienna said of her interpretation of Medea that it was more impressive than that of Charlotte Wolter. In 1892, at the World Drama Festival in Vienna, Jászai performed in six different plays on six consecutive evenings.

81 The Comedy Theatre was built in the new, prosperous suburb of Leopoldstad, and had an experienced manager in Mór Ditrói, whose simple formula was "good plays and good performances".

82 Her married name was Mrs Kassai, her maiden name was Mária Krippel. Her stage name was of her own invention.

83 His cycle of poems, the Reseda poems, was dedicated to Jászai.

84 Mari Jászai to Georg Brandes, 26.10. 1900, Brandes Archive.

85 Mari Jászai to Georg Brandes, 6.4. 1900, Brandes Archive.

86 Pil Dahlerup, *op.cit.*, pp. 96ff.

87 Georg Brandes to Mari Jászai, Ostertag 1900, OSzK.

88 Mari Jászai to Georg Brandes, 26.10. 1900, Brandes Archive.

89 Mari Jászai to Georg Brandes, 6.4. 1900, Brandes Archive.

90 Mari Jászai to Georg Brandes, 8.6. 1900, Brandes Archive.

91 Mari Jászai to Georg Brandes, 6.4. 1900, Brandes Archive.

92 Georg Brandes to Mari Jászai, Ostertag 1900, OSzK.

93 Mari Jászai to Georg Brandes, 6.4. 1900, Brandes Archive.

94 Mari Jászai to Georg Brandes, 8.6. 1900, Brandes Archive.

95 Brandes also told Arthur Fitger of the attack in *Frankfurter Zeitung*. See *Correspondance*, *op.cit.*, 4, p. 373. On 30.4. 1900 Brandes mentioned "a dozen scurrilous articles" to Arthur Schnitzler. See *Georg Brandes und Arthur Schnitzler*, *op.cit.*, p. 80.

96 Georg Brandes to Elise Gomperz, 22.4. 1900. Cited from: *Georg Brandes und Arthur Schnitzler*, *op.cit.*, p. 187.

97 Hedda Lenkei to Georg Brandes, 30.3. 1900, Brandes Archive.

98 *Ibid.*

99 The National Theatre put on five of his plays between 1896 and 1907.

100 Zoltán Bosnyák, *Le droit de l'enfant abandonné*, Paris 1909; translation of his revolutionary work, *A gyámügyi közigasgatás reform*, 1890.

101 Georg Brandes to Mari Jászai, Ostertag 1900, OSzK.

102 Hedda Lenkei to Georg Brandes, 8.2. 1902, Brandes Archive.

103 Hedda Lenkei to Georg Brandes, 1.8. 1901, Brandes Archive.

104 Hedda Lenkei to Georg Brandes, 4.11. 1906, Brandes Archive.

105 Hedda Lenkei to Georg Brandes, 1.8. 1901, Brandes Archive.

106 Hedda Lenkei to Georg Brandes, 7.8. 1900, Brandes Archive.

107 Hedda Lenkei to Georg Brandes, 30.7. 1902, Brandes Archive.

108 Hedda Lenkei to Georg Brandes, 11.7. 1902, Brandes Archive.

109 Hedda Lenkei to Georg Brandes, 5.3. 1903, Brandes Archive.

110 Hedda Lenkei to Georg Brandes, 2.6. 1900, Brandes Archive.

111 Hedda Lenkei to Georg Brandes, 4.8. 1906, Brandes Archive.

112 Hedda Lenkei to Georg Brandes, 4.11. 1906, Brandes Archive.

113 Hedda Lenkei to Georg Brandes, 4.5. 1900, Brandes Archive.

114 Hedda Lenkei to Georg Brandes, 4.11. 1906, Brandes Archive.

> Although I had very little aptitute for the role of politician or indeed for any role beyond the world of ideas, I certainly never thought of myself as a scholar, nor as a writer of entertainments, a literary historian or anything of that nature. I seemed more suited to become a man of action.
>
> Georg Brandes

CHAPTER 5

GEORGE BRANDES' SECOND VISIT TO BUDAPEST (1907)

The Invitation

In the years between his two visits, Georg Brandes' contacts with the Hungarian public were both active and lively. He corresponded with several people and the Hungarians began to take an interest in Scandinavia as an exotic outpost of Europe. They visited Copenhagen in increasing numbers and many of them called on Brandes. He had become a friend of Hungary and consequently a stream of letters poured into his home at Østerbro, expressing gratitude. But his help, expertise and influence were also requested, especially on literary and publishing matters.

A young literary critic, Lajos Hatvany,[1] one of the co-founders of the subsequently illustrious literary periodical *Nyugat* (The West), contacted Brandes during a visit to Copenhagen in 1905. There was nothing unusual about Hungarian pilgrims regarding Brandes as the 'revered' object of their visit, since to the new generation of Hungarian *literati* he represented the very institution of literature. Oblique echoes of *Main Currents* could be detected in many young writers who had just set out on their literary journeys. Hatvany's letter is a prime example:

> Es wäre mir gewiss das denkbar Erfreulichste und Beehrenste dürfte ich den Schriftsteller, dessen Werke auf mich so umgestaltend, so tief wirkten nun auch persönlich kennen zu lernen. Gewiss ich würde es zu den grössten Impressionen meines Lebens rechnen.[2]

The writer of this letter, who was 25 years old at the time, enclosed his first German-language article, which was due to be published in the periodical *Zukunft*,[3] and in view of this, he asked Brandes if he would read the article and give his opinion of it. At the same time, Hatvany indicated his willingness to contribute an essay on Sainte-Beuve to the German *Biografien Sammlung*,[4] which he knew that Brandes edited. Although nothing came of this, the link with Brandes had at last been forged.

Lajos Hatvany - literary critic and patron of the celebrated magazine Nyugat *(The West)*

A quality noted in Brandes by his recipients during the visit to Hungary was his clarity of judgement and his critical sense when expressing his views. This led to a steady stream of manuscripts flowing from Budapest to Copenhagen. Those who knew Brandes personally were especially eager to keep him up to date with their latest work. Ferenc Szécsi (1861-1941), the editor of *Pesti Napló* (Budapest Daily), sent his much-acclaimed play, *Utazás az özvegység felé* (Journey to Widowhood), to Brandes for his opinion. Another close acquaintance, the literary scholar Vilmos Huszár, sent his dissertation on *P. Corneille et le théâtre espagnol.*[5] Generally speaking, it is impossible to say how the many books that were sent to him were received by Brandes, whether he actually read and evaluated them. In the case of Huszár, however, we know that Brandes found the book interesting. A special relationship arose because in 1903 Brandes wrote an article[6] based on the Hungarian literary scholar's dissertation. Towards the end of the essay, Brandes makes an explicit reference to his Hungarian source of inspiration:

> Huszár has performed the not inconsiderable service of presenting these ideas cleary and of attempting to teach the French, in their own language, about one of their own great men. They will probably notice a certain lack of warmth towards Corneille, whereas the Spaniards have every reason to be satisfied with the treatment their poets have received.[7]

In the seven years between the two visits, no major work by Brandes had been translated into Hungarian, but this certainly does not mean that he was not read. New editions supplemented the old ones: *Gesammelte Schriften* from 1902 and the English translation of *Main Currents* could now be consulted in the library of the Hungarian Academy of Science. Despite the nationalistic aversion to German, this was actually the language in which Brandes was mainly read.

Between 1900 and 1907, two texts by Brandes were published, both of them in Sándor Bródy's (1863-1924) controversial periodical *Jövendő* (The Future). He was considered to be the pioneer of Hungarian naturalism, and his work as a publisher was similarly thought of as innovative and 'modern'. The progressive *Jövendő* was firmly anchored in left-wing radicalism and chose to campaign on urban problems. The main aim of *Jövendő* was to support a new, naturalistic form of literature that was disturbing and different in its search for truth.[8] On many counts, this periodical was regarded as one of the most important forerunners of the celebrated *Nyugat.*

It was not entirely fortuitous that the two essays by Brandes were published in Bródy's periodical. He was personally acquainted with Brandes; they met in 1900 when the critic paid his first visit to Budapest. And as a bourgeois radical and "writer of the Hungarian breakthrough", he was on the same wavelength as Brandes. Between 1900 and 1902 Bródy published a journal called *Fehér könyv* (White Book), of which he wrote every page himself. He published an article in this describing a lively meeting with Brandes, at which they had discussed the ethical and moral implications of Tolstoy's novel *Resurrection*. In Brandes' opinion, "Tolstoy had misused the dogmas of religion in order to furnish his work with moral ballast,"[9] and Bródy agreed with him.

Sándor Bródy - the founder of Hungarian naturalism.

Brandes' essay entitled *Arthur Görgei*[10] was published in 1903. Its publication at such a politically unstable, repressive time was of great importance, since it firmly established an image of Brandes that showed his sympathy with, and understanding of, Hungary in the fateful revolution. The essay also gave sustenance to national aspirations and reawakened some of the romantic myths of the 1848 uprising.

The other essay published in *Jövendő* was "Bolondok mágnese" (Magnet for Madmen),[11] an ironic pamphlet describing the difficult, thankless vocation of the critic, which had undertones of bitter, personal experience. To Hungarians, there was an extra dimension to "Magnet for Madmen", since it indirectly exposed the prevailing, bigoted public opinion, and it was a further refinement that the essay, which was actually concerned with the situation in Denmark where left-wing radicalism had to face constant attacks from conservatives, could also be read in the context of internal Hungarian politics.

One result of Brandes' first visit to Budapest was a steady flow of pressing

invitations to return soon on another lecture tour. Thus, in 1902, Huszár wrote to Brandes: "There has recently been some talk of asking you to return."[12] A similar formulation was used in 1903. But although Brandes was often near Budapest, spending every summer in Karlsbad during this period and visiting Austria in 1903 and Prague in 1905, on none of these visits did he go to the Hungarian capital. It was not for lack of encouragement. On 1 January 1907, Brandes received an invitation together with a New Year's greeting. Hedda Lenkei was behind this letter. All in all, it is indicative that Brandes' second visit to Budapest was initiated and organised by some of his female recipients, notably Hedda Lenkei and Elza Szász, who had corresponded with him in the previous seven years. Hedda Lenkei goes straight to the point:

> Und jetzt komme ich mit einer grossen Bitte, deren Erfüllung mir endlich Gelegenheit bieten würde Sie hochverehrten Meister wiedersehen zu können. Ich wurde heute von der Landes Kinderschutz Liga gebeten Ihnen zu schreiben und Sie zu fragen und zu bitten, ob Sie hochverehrter Meister geneigt wären Mitte Februar hier zu sprechen und was Ihre Bedingungen sind. Dem Verein wird kein Opfer zu gross sein Sie zu diesem Zwecke zu gewinnen. Es soll ein literarisches Ereigniss werden Ibsens Hedda Gabler wurde erstenmal zur Vorstellung gelangen gespielt von Mitgliedern des Nationaltheaters. In wie hohem Masse Sie den Werth des bei uns schon grossen Ereignisses erhöhen würden, darüber habe ich ja nicht zu sprechen.[13]

There was a double motive behind Lenkei's project: for one thing, it was a charity performance, which Brandes' lecture was intended to give added prominence to. From Lenkei's reply to Brandes it would seem that "the master" felt piqued at the idea of being used as some kind of Master of Ceremonies to introduce the performance; Lenkei was injudicious enough to call Brandes' lecture a "framing" of Ibsen's play. She quickly tried to retrieve the situation:

> Auf Ihre Bemerkung liebster Meister, Sie sollen unsere Vorstellung schmücken, muss ich antworten. Jedenfalls wäre es ein sehr kostbarer Schmuck. Aber es ist eine Sache für sich um das sich alles andere dreht! Es ist jedenfalls Egoismus dass wir uns so eine illustre Persönlichkeit wählten (hauptsächlich meinerseits).[14]

The other motive behind the invitation - that he should attend the Hungarian première of *Hedda Gabler* - no doubt appealed to Brandes, since he had always wanted to see the Norwegian playwright performed on the stages of Europe. Lenkei, with her professional insight and knowledge of how little the Hungarian theatre-going public knew about Ibsen, anticipated that Brandes' lecture would supply the necessary background knowledge. As she explained apologetically to Brandes: "Wir benötigen leider noch einer solchen Entourage um für ihn [Ibsen] Interesse zu erwecken."[15]

The charity event in 1907 revolved mainly around Ibsen. Lenkei's letters show that even before 1907 she had seized every possible opportunity to write to Brandes, whom she rightly considered to be the great authority on Ibsen, about her special interest in the Norwegian playwright. The letters also reveal that although Lenkei did not attend Brandes' lecture in 1900 on Ibsen the man, she had read the text of the lecture in *Pesti Napló*. Furthermore, as an actress she was obviously involved in the production of the plays in the theatre, which had given her the idea of translating *Hedda Gabler* into Hungarian. This enterprise also stemmed from 1900 and was actually initiated by Brandes, insofar as he supported Lenkei's choice of play and praised her for the "little bit of Danish that she had acquired".[16] The translation of the play via the German version was undoubtedly a formidable task, especially since Lenkei simultaneously attempted to compare the German with the original version. She became so influenced by her work on the translation that she changed her name from Hedvig to Hedda, after Ibsen's title heroine! She was successful in getting the play included in the National Theatre's repertoire. After this, it was natural for Hedda Lenkei to persuade Brandes to come to Hungary, to provide with his lecture a glittering frame for the production.

The League for the Protection of Children was one of the biggest and most famous charities in Hungary, whose board consisted of members of the aristocracy and the gentry. It was a careful act of calculation on the part of the committee that they planned to hold Brandes' lecture in the Hungarian Academy of Science or in the Great Chamber of the Town Hall, since this would underline the serious nature of the event. Vilmos Huszár, who issued another invitation, at the request of Hedda Lenkei, emphasized to Brandes the elevated nature of the occasion:

> Frau Lenkei sagte mir, ich soll Sie ersuchen, nach Budapest zu kommen und hier eine Vorlesung zu halten. Die Bedingungen wären die glänzendsten alle Ihre Auslagen zur Reise und ein Ihnen würdiges Honorar. Sie könnten diesmal das Land wirklich sich

näher anschauen, die Regierung würde Ihnen alle möglichen Mittel dazu zur Verfügung stellen. Der Verein, in dem die Vorlesung zu halten wäre, ist einer der vornehmsten: die Baronin Edelsheim-Gyulai und der Minister des Innern Graf Andrássy stehen an der Spitze des Ausschuss Comités.[17]

However, Brandes became ill and the visit had to be postponed. From Lenkei's letter of 20 January 1907, it appears that Brandes was tired and had little inclination to travel. The première also had to be postponed until 1 March 1907; the date was later moved again to 12 March. The League for the Protection of Children offered to pay any travel expenses plus the fee of 1,000 Danish Kroner[18] that Brandes demanded for his lecture. In return, they asked for the text to be handed over for free publication.

As regards the actual content of the lecture, the only stipulation Lenkei made on behalf of the League for the Protection of Children was that in some way or other the lecture should deal with *Hedda Gabler*. But she wrote that Brandes did not have to confine himself exclusively to Ibsen; he could also include other aspects of Scandinavian literature. Lenkei was reasonably certain that Brandes' lecture would help raise the expectations of the audience and create a favourable climate for the play. She also passed on to him the committee's request that the lecture be given in French. This was a relatively harmless manifestation of the gentry's anti-Austrian views and an expression of their somewhat hostile stance. But in the next letter, Hedda Lenkei apologetically asked Brandes if he would give the lecture in German after all:

Jetzt bekomme ich einen Putzer von Ihnen liebster Meister. Nach langer hin- und her-Berathung muss ich Sie bitten doch deutsch zu sprechen da die Leute hier trotz allen Hasses diese Sprache doch besser beherrschen.[19]

Wednesday 6 March was finally fixed as the date of his arrival, and Mrs Lenkei made sure that the reception was low-key, since Brandes had explained beforehand that there was nothing he loathed more than large reception committees at railway stations. He was convalescing and wanted peace and quiet; because of ill-health he was unable to participate in the dinner party that Zoltán Bosnyák and Hedda Lenkei had organised in his honour to bid him welcome. This time, the government was also informed of Brandes' visit, and the receptions were, if anything, even more glittering than those in 1900. There were several official dinners where Brandes was

given the opportunity to meet the most celebrated artists, scientists and politicians of the age. The Finnish painter, Akseli Gallen-Kallela (1865-1931), who had just arrived in Budapest to receive a gold medal in connection with an international exhibition, was invited to one of the banquets held in Brandes' honour. The meeting was an event that even many years later continued to appeal to the Finnish painter's vanity. In his memoirs, Gallen-Kallela tells how those present gradually lost interest in Brandes and began to talk about Finland, and how he became the centre of everyone's attention.[20] Together with Gallen-Kallela, Brandes was invited to tour the newly opened art gallery (Szépmüvészeti Múzeum),[21] he attended a dinner party for professors hosted by the famous historian Henrik Marczali (1856-1940),[22] and he frequented the salons of Budapest with a circle of people who hailed him as "the voice from outside".

Brandes' Lecture

On 7 March 1907 Brandes gave his lecture in the Urania Theatre, an imposing lecture room in one of the most prestigious areas of Budapest. The lecture was delivered in French after all, and a Hungarian translation was published in *Az Ujság* (The Newspaper), the newspaper of the Liberal Party, which had quite a large circulation. With his usual subtle insight and sense of occasion Brandes took as his point of departure Ibsen's personal relationship with Hungary, including his visit there in 1891, of which he always spoke very warmly. With due regard for national feelings, Brandes referred to a poem by the youthful Ibsen that was dedicated to Hungary, praising the Hungarians' brave struggle against a superior power during the 1848 Revolution:

> Ja, naar kjækt de unge Slægter hævnende mod Thronen farer
> som en Høstorkan og styrter Tyranniets Grundpillarer,
> Da skal Magyarernavnet stolt ved sine Heltes Hæder,
> som et vakkert Løsen tordne fra de seirende Geleder![23]
>
> (When daringly the nation's youths storm forth against the throne
> Like harvest gales, avenging, and leave oppression prone,
> Then shall the word Magyar, with honour 'mongst the flanks,
> Resound and act as symbol to the triumphant ranks!)

"Thus, in a sense, Ibsen also belongs to Hungary," concluded Brandes. As on an earlier lecture tour of Poland, he managed to hit the right note to gain

the sympathy of his audience, while also displaying his awareness of the political situation of his host country.

Brandes always regarded the struggles of oppressed peoples for national sovereignty as an important expression of a nation's vitality and intellectual vigour. In his speech, however, he pointed out that the kind of national pride that takes the form of total detachment from external influences and a feeling of self-sufficiency, is dangerous. This attitude, which dismisses foreign influences as unnecessary or harmful, deprives the country in question of opportunities for development. But he was courteous enough to say that the Hungarians could hardly be accused of holding that particular view. This part of the lecture was especially tailored to fit Hungarian conditions, insofar as the same problems were dealt with in his article "Ibsen in France".[24] Brandes was less cautious in his remarks to the French, when he pointed out that "in France, a very strong national, indeed nationalistic, reaction gradually set in, not only as far as Ibsen was concerned, but against any kind of foreign influence. A burgeoning self-esteem replaced the earlier receptiveness."[25]

There is a clear pattern discernible in Brandes' presentation, which must naturally be seen in the context of his general view of literature and which today would be called *Wirkungsgeschichte* or *Rezeptionsästhetik*. Adopting the point of view of the recipient, Brandes attempts to explain why Ibsen's plays seem to be so alien and so inaccessible outside Scandinavia.

The reason why some critics have found parts of Ibsen incomprehensible or obscure can be found in their ignorance of the environment in which his work was created. In order to achieve a deep understanding of a literary personality, one has to know his background, find out who his predecessors were, what the circumstances of his upbringing were, and who influenced him. In order to understand the literature of a country, one has to be familiar with the moral climate and the customs of that country:

> For we can truly say, with a clear conscience: ... Assessments of Scandinavian literature will be of little value to us if they are made by men who know nothing of our life and customs, who are thus in no position to judge how the work compares with the conditions that are being described, by men who have even less knowledge of our language and literature and therefore cannot pass any judgement on the strength and elegance of the language that is such an important element of poetry, any more than they can have any idea of the national tradition that lies behind the literary work.[26]

Brandes applied these ideas to Hungarian conditions, too, boldly intimating that the Hungarians must have experienced this phenomenon in connection with their own literature over the years, since the language had cut their country off from the "common market" (*sic!*),[27] and the great Hungarian poets had constantly been misinterpreted because of that ignorance of Hungary's historical reality. On the other hand, if the Hungarians did have anything against Ibsen, it should not be attributed to the strangeness of his plays, but rather to the general difficulties involved in understanding him. Brandes stressed that "one cannot expect a work of literature to be as clear as electric light. This is partly because it is not a characteristic of literature and partly because life does not have the clarity of electric light either. And the work should reflect life. The power of great works of art does not lie in their perfect clarity, neither *Hamlet* nor Madách's *The Tragedy of Man* is completely penetrable."[28]

Superficial translations are often responsible for the blurring of linguistic clarity. The naturalness of a dialogue is the first thing that is lost in translation. Brandes cites an extract from Edmond de Goncourt's diary in which the French writer comments that the language in *The Wild Duck* is unnatural. Goncourt must simply have felt that the world in which Ibsen lived was too remote from him. Brandes explained that the reader who is close to a literary movement soon discovers the models that these writers use in their work and therefore appreciates the powers of description, the imagination and independence of the writer in question. The foreign critic, however, who knows neither the language, the moral framework nor the background of the writer can only understand the work if he compares it with literary texts with which he is already familiar. And he connects the impressions that arise during the reading with similar impressions from earlier reading experiences. The very effort on the part of the reader to understand the work lessens the sense of the new work's originality. That is what happened to Ibsen's work in France: Zola compared Ibsen with George Sand, and this casual idea was taken up and developed by Francisque Sarcey and Jules Lemaitre. In Germany, however, Ibsen was received as one of the greatest of all naturalists, comparable with Zola and Tolstoy, and *Freie Bühne für modernes Leben* played an important role in bringing this about.

In his lecture, Brandes emphasized that there were of course a number of influences on Ibsen, but his originality was in no way diminished by having learnt from his predecessors. He also explained that whenever anyone is daring enough to say that Ibsen's drama does not contain anything that is truly original, it is because new thoughts and ideas are not discovered by writers, philosophers or scientists. Nothing in literature is completely new.

What is important in Ibsen is the innovation in dramatic technique; and in this area he was revolutionary.

In the second part of the lecture, in order to develop further his statement about the necessary link between knowledge of the milieu and literary tradition of the writer and the understanding and appropriation of the work, Brandes gave an analysis of the Norwegian society that Ibsen depicted in *Hedda Gabler*.

In his evaluation of Norwegian society, Brandes drew attention to "the formlessness of forthrightness" and to a certain "coarseness of thought and speech", where the "rigid reservation" and "total openness" are found side by side.[29] Understandably enough, Brandes contrasted Hungarian society with Norwegian society in order to reveal the special characteristics of the latter:

> Norwegian society is depicted in this play, as in the others, as a society without nobility and without any aristocratic tradition. The entire intellectual aristocracy of this society, its greatest talents in poetry, the visual arts and music, almost without exception, have for decades spent nearly all their time outside the country.[30]

Brandes presented this picture of an unpolished milieu in order to highlight the "national vitality" discernible in Norway, which "in the last generation has succeeded in bringing forth great and fresh natural abilities". But the society cannot offer enough opportunities for the development and nourishment of these abilities and that is why such a natural force as Hedda Gabler must necessarily be destroyed.

On the question of whether Ibsen's female characters are in fact Norwegian female types, Brandes explained that a good dramatist creates individuals, not types. He saw the character of Hedda Gabler as more cosmopolitan than specifically Norwegian. The figure of Hedda has the universality that ensures that the character can be understood everywhere. Brandes unquestionably put his finger on the intention behind the play by interpreting it as a study of a woman in whose character the elevated, the evil and the decadent co-exist.

Brandes' natural inclination towards making comparisons can also be seen in his character sketch of Hedda. He compared her with female characters in the plays of Ibsen's youth, *Catalina*, *The Feast at Solhaug* and *The Vikings at Helgoland*. The point of this comparison was that in Brandes' opinion, Ibsen divides "a brilliant masculinity between two women, a wild one and a gentle one, a Valkyrie and a Nurse".[31] But Brandes stressed that Hedda is much more of a composite character who, despite her negative personality traits,

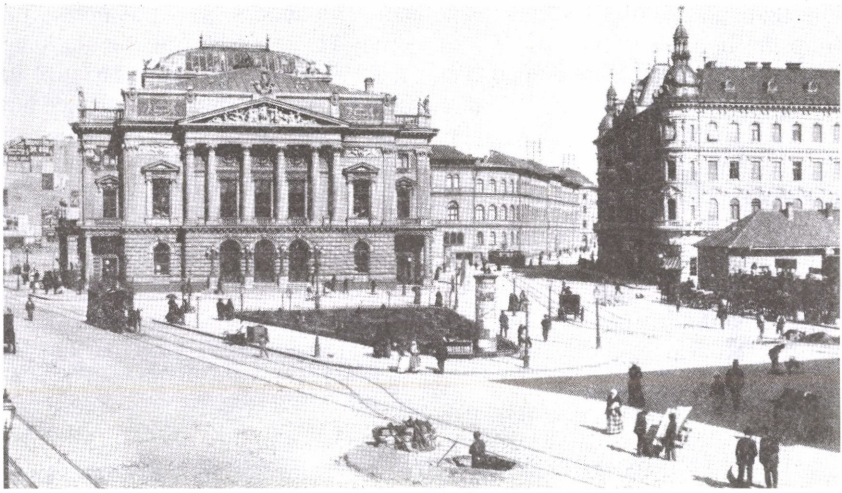
arouses the audience's sympathy when she dies. And this sympathy is extended to the whole of humanity. In this way, Brandes also touched on the very nature of tragedy.

That such an experienced speaker chose to base his lecture on his previous essays on Ibsen, was due to a desire to put *Hedda Gabler* into perspective for the Hungarian audience which, according to Hedda Lenkei, knew very little about Ibsen's work. Brandes obviously put a lot of effort into its preparation. The lecture shows clear signs of having been constructed with a Hungarian public in mind. At the end, Brandes addressed himself directly to his audience:

> It is by sheer coincidence that on both my visits to Budapest I have talked about Ibsen. He was a good friend of mine but I am not his apostle. And although I prefer to advocate my own causes rather than those of others, I am by no means displeased to serve him here, a second time.[32]

The Hungarian Première of *Hedda Gabler* at the National Theatre

As Mrs Lenkei feared, the first night of *Hedda Gabler* had only a lukewarm reception. It was not Ibsen's fault, nor was it Hedda Lenkei's. The play was reviewed in *Magyar Nemzet* (The Hungarian Nation) by Marcell Benedek, a gifted aesthete and drama critic. The review focused mainly on the response of the public, the Hungarian audience having watched the play uncomprehendingly and absent-mindedly. As he wrote: "They are bored out of their minds by an Ibsen play."[33] And it was the *beau monde* of Budapest who attended the première. This public, according to Benedek, was accustomed to characters being drawn in black and white, which meant that they were disturbed by Ibsen's more complex portraits. But the reviewer praised the actual performance, both the direction and the superb acting. He thought that Lenkei, in the title role, displayed a thorough understanding of Hedda Gabler, down to the smallest detail, and Benedek also praised the talented director, Sándor Hevesi.



The Hungarian National Theatre. This is where Georg Brandes saw the first performance of Hedda Gabler *in 1907.*

The German-language periodical *Pester Lloyd* made similar comments. The reviewer regretted the fact that Central Europe still lagged behind when it came to understanding Ibsen's plays. The Hungarian public was described as the sluggish Mohammed who has finally started to drag himself towards the mountain on which the "sonderliche Blumen blümen" and where Hedda Gabler is such a "nordliche Edelweiss".[34]

> Der düstere Ernst, mit dem Ibsen das Schönheitsideal zerstört, um die Nüsslichkeit, die Mutterschaft, dem realen Lebenszweck als Höchstes zu preisen, behagt nicht allen Zuschauern. Speziell bei uns ist die "Erziehung zu Ibsen" noch lange nicht vollendet. Das sah man bei der heutigen Première, die, zu Gunsten der Kinderschutzliga verantaltet, dem sehr eleganten Publikum nur mässigen Beifall abgewann.[35]

Pester Lloyd also singled out Lenkei, who "performed with an inner control, somewhat stylised at the beginning but with depth later on, showing great understanding."[36]

Mari Jászai made some spiteful, patronising comments about her colleague that were in marked contrast to the glowing praise of the reviewers. Immediately after Brandes' arrival in Budapest, she complained to

him that "an ape of an actress", who is only an actress "as far as her waist, from the bottom up, that is"[37] was to play Hedda Gabler at the National Theatre, while she herself appeared at the *Népszinház* (People's Theatre) in Buda. She tried to persuade Brandes to come to see her own performance but knew, deep down, that this was simply out of the question. "Aber natürlich füge ich mich Ihren Willen mein lichter Sonnenstrahl,"[38] she wrote with resignation.

In 1900, Jászai had already reacted negatively to the warm greeting that Brandes had sent to Mrs Lenkei in a letter addressed to Jászai: "Grüssen Sie von mir die kleine süsse Frau Lenkei, die sieht aus wie eine feine Zeichnung von Leonardo; ich habe sie lieb wegen des bischen Dänisch, das sie gelesen hat."[39] To which Jászai had replied: "...Ihr theures Wort werde ich der kleinen Collegin nicht übergeben. Warum? Ich habe das Gefühl, nicht von Ihrem Briefe zu spechen. Mit niemanden."[40]

In 1907, Jászai's jealousy rose to the surface. On this occasion Brandes was kept very busy with his official duties. "I am not allowed a moment's peace and quiet,"[41] he complained to Jászai, who pestered him ceaselessly. There was not really time for the two correspondents to have a *tête-à-tête*, since Brandes was constantly on the move, taking up invitations from the hospitable Magyars. Jászai was deeply upset by Hedda Lenkei's "arrangements". She felt, perhaps with some justification, that her younger colleague was taking Brandes away from her. She probably had no knowledge of the earlier correspondence between Hedda and Brandes or of the great efforts Hedda had made in connection with Brandes' invitation.

The Petőfi Society

News of Brandes' imminent visit to Budapest spread like wildfire. Soon after the arrival of Lenkei's invitation, Brandes received a letter from his committed, industrious admirer Elza Szász, this time petitioning him on behalf of the Petőfi Society (*Petőfi-Társaság*), a literary society that had the most important poets, writers and critics among its members[42] and which could boast of having the nestor of Hungarian literature, Mór Jókai, as its founding president. The society was in sympathy with those who formed the national opposition and this political standpoint was expressed not least in the cultivation of the memory of the national bard, Sándor Petőfi. The chairman of the committee at the time was the popular novelist Ferenc Herczeg, whom Elza Szász persuaded to invite Brandes to give a lecture to the members of the Petőfi Society. Mrs Szász wrote as follows:

> I said that we were good friends, that you would not refuse if I asked you nicely, (I did not tell them that you cannot even remember what I look like!) ... Please don't say no, dear, dear Professor Brandes![43]

With this earnest entreaty to the "cultural missionary", Elza Szász described the society's prestige project:

> We want to establish a Petőfi House (you who know everything must have heard of our great poet, Petőfi, who was killed in the Revolution in 1848?), like the Goethe House in Weimar and the Shakespeare House in Stratford, where his memory can be preserved and the relics we have of him can be kept ... The Petőfi Society has been working towards this for many years; and now we women have taken on the task of raising the rest of the money needed ... I am asking you not on my own behalf, for I have now become humble, but on behalf of the most beautiful, the most amiable members of our Committee, and on behalf of Countess Apponyi, our President.[44]

Brandes could not resist this request and Mrs Szász joyfully exclaimed in her next letter: "You are both an angel and Georg Brandes at one and the same time, and I cannot imagine a more wonderful combination than that."[45]

As far as the subject of the lecture was concerned, Elza Szász had some very definite views about what she wanted. She was just as single-minded as Lenkei was with her Hedda Gabler project. The Society would naturally have preferred Brandes to talk about Petőfi, but Mrs Szász realized that "this might be asking too much". She therefore suggested a topic that was related to the 1848 movements:

> I have spoken to the President of the Petőfi Society and he would like you to bring the lecture on Goethe and the Idea of Freedom and the chapter in *Main Currents* on the 1848 movements in Berlin and Vienna. We can decide which of the two to use once you are here.[46]

The lecture was held on 8 March in the Teresienstad Casino, an exclusive club, most of whose members came from the aristocracy and the gentry. Brandes gave the lecture in German, after long and difficult deliberations with the committee. The fact that he chose to speak on the subject of *Voltaire*

and Frederick the Great rather than on either of the subjects suggested by Mrs Szász was to have serious consequences for the outcome of the lecture. Brandes' decision was perhaps not so surprising considering that he had given the same lecture the previous year in Hamburg, Lübeck and Berlin.[47] Furthermore, this lecture was ready for publication by January 1907.[48] One could say that Brandes took the easy way out when he used this manuscript for the lecture evening at the Petőfi Society. The lecture was disseminated to a wider public in *Pester Lloyd*,[49] the most important German-language publication in Hungary. Brandes' article, *Voltaire and Frederick the Great*, was published in serial form and the first part was printed on the periodical's front page. As far as we know, it was in *Pester Lloyd* that the first German-language version of the essay appeared.

This choice of subject, however, was to prove fatal as far as Brandes' reception was concerned. The lecture had no real connection with the occasion, i.e. with the establishment of the Petőfi Memorial House. Neither Voltaire nor Frederick the Great seemed to be of more than marginal interest in 1907. The actual theme of the lecture, the relationship between the artist and the monarch, was of course of topical interest, but the Hungarians, who were quick to see links between themselves and foreign examples, were unable to identify themselves with this one, since the characters of Voltaire and Frederick the Great bore such markedly individualistic traits. The general theme of 'poet versus ruler' was not highlighted in the lecture; instead, Brandes concentrated on the lifelong love-hate relationship of the two individuals in question.

Brandes' unfortunate choice of subject led to negative reviews in the press and to harsh criticism of the initiatives of the League for the Protection of Children and the Petőfi Society. Hedda Lenkei, as the person responsible for organising the visit, was thereby also indirectly attacked. The idea behind Brandes' second visit to Budapest was in fact misguided because the visit had been relegated to a kind of entertainment, a social event, at which Brandes, as he had rightly pointed out in a letter to Lenkei, was required to act the part of "celebrated Master of Ceremonies". The spiritual needs that dominated the atmosphere during his first visit had now given way to expectations of a more materialistic nature, insofar as each of the two lectures was to take place in the context of a charitable event. Even so, it should not be forgotten that in spite of everything Brandes did agree to visit Budapest; this says something about his positive attitude towards new ventures, about his work to popularise Ibsen and last, but not least, about the strength of his commitment to the cause of Eastern and Central Europe.

The Visit as Reflected in the Hungarian Press

In contrast to the first visit in 1900, the 1907 visit left in its wake a large number of discordant reverberations. Some clues as to why the unanimous acclaim of the first visit was succeeded by a cacaphony of voices after the second visit can be found in the actual historical circumstances in which the visits took place.

The departure of the Prime Minister, Kálmán Tisza (1830-1902), in 1890 heralded a chaotic period with a succession of prime ministers, who were unable to govern the country properly. The work of parliament was slowed down by endless debates and resolutions. In 1903, the new Leader of the Government, István Tisza (1861-1918), the son of Kálmán Tisza, put an end to the 'obstruction' of Parliament by taking firm action. Parliamentarianism disappeared and a united opposition led to his forced departure from office in 1905. With his departure, the Liberal Party lost the position of power that it had held since the 1867 Treaty. A series of coalition governments followed, whose policies were shrouded in a nationalistic mist. There were promises of democracy and of the restitution of national rights, but instead the coalition government voted in favour of a strengthening of the joint army and accepted a disadvantageous renewal of the Austro-Hungarian trade agreement. That same year, Albert Apponyi's (1846-1933) notorious Education Act was introduced, which admittedly brought in free education, but the new regulations about teachers' salaries meant that schools in minority areas would now be dependent on Hungarian subsidies. These subsidies were only granted if the Hungarian language was taught. This is just one example of the militant nationalist policies that were endemic in Hungary at the turn of the century.[50]

The move towards nationalistic conservatism within Hungary, which occurred in the seven years between Brandes' two visits, set its mark on the course of his visit. Seven years may not seem very long, but it was long enough for a very different atmosphere to be discernible. While a liberal atmosphere predominated during the period immediately after the treaty with Austria, the atmosphere became increasingly conservative from the beginning of the new century. The liberals gradually lost the last vestiges of their oppositional liberalism. The actual opposition, which demanded the abolition of the landed estates, the clergy and the chauvinistic, nationalistic policies, and wanted to introduce democratic civil rights as well as universal suffrage, consisted of a comparatively small group in terms of numbers, but they succeeded in making their voices heard very effectively in cultural and political debates. This circle of left-wing radicals regarded any attempt to

protect Hungarian cultural autonomy as a perversion of misunderstood nationalism, and so they gave their whole-hearted support to greater contact with Europe.

Right-wing radicalism manifested itself in repressive policies on nationality. However, it would be an over-simplification to associate nationalistic attitudes solely with this movement. The middle-class as a whole dreamed of securing Hungarian hegemony within the monarchy. It was not just a question of ritual political slogans; the entire terminological structure surrounding 'Hungarianism' was deeply embedded in the popular consciousness and tugged at emotional chords. The Hungarian freedom struggle of 1848 gradually became swathed in a special form of romanticism and embellished with mystical elements that strengthened the illusion and clouded the sense of reality and the clear historical vision. The term 'fatherland', which had still had a progressive meaning in the 1860s, now became an expression of a chauvinistic demand for territorial integrity, full of irrational connotations. The wider sense of the term 'Hungarianism' was reduced to a racial definition, which gave legitimacy to the oppression of national minorities, including the anti-Semitism that was slowly surfacing.

The reactionary policy adopted by the coalition parties provoked opposition from the Left. At the turn of the century and in the first decade of the new century, the class of bourgeois intellectuals had become strong and powerful enough to express dissatisfaction with the prevailing political conditions. At that time, the bourgeoisie was both financially and culturally 'emancipated'. Unlike the chauvinism and provincial smugness of right-wing radicalism, they looked to modern, Western European intellectual movements for support. A circle of left-wing radicals emerged that was largely composed of young, Jewish intellectuals, who founded *Társadalomtudományi Társaság* (The Sociological Society) in 1905, which was centred around Oszkár Jászi's[51] periodical *Huszadik Század* (The Twentieth Century). The radical, political credo of this circle had a strong attraction for the discontented reformist politicians and for anyone with leanings towards Western Europe, who were only too painfully conscious of Hungary's social backwardness and intellectual deafness. It was in this climate that Georg Brandes met his Hungarian public.

The circle that invited Brandes to pay his second visit thus belonged to a class whose ideas and norms were very different from those of Brandes' first

Georg Brandes around the year 1907.

Hungarian contacts, the bourgeois liberals. The League for the Protection of Children, in particular, and in due course the Petőfi Society became preserves of the gentry, albeit the more progressive elements of that class. Unlike the members of the pro-Western Europe Leopoldstad Casino, who thought they had found their ideal figure in Brandes and who regarded him as the prototype of a liberal activist and genuine citizen of the world, the gentry class were seeking very different qualities in Brandes, which did not necessarily have any political connotations. To them, he was primarily "the celebrated European". The above-mentioned organisations invited Brandes because they wanted him to give extra lustre to the fashionable public with his lectures, and when these lectures proved to be not quite to their taste, the public's reaction was surprisingly negative. The previously homogeneous group of admirers now began to split up. A clear polarisation could be observed in the press; the two most influential newspapers of the day, the bourgeois-liberal *A Hét* (The Week) and the more traditional and conservative *Új Idők* (The New Times) moved into opposing camps with their assessments of Brandes' visit.

Új Idők was rather hard on him and concluded that "Brandes made an unpleasant impression and he must also take unpleasant impressions of Hungary back with him."[52] This dissatisfaction permeates the whole article, which for understandable reasons was written under a pseudonym. The reviewer revels in irrelevant and downright misleading information, as when he writes: "Brandes discovered that the Hungarian public was only interested in hearing one lecture, and let the room remain empty for the next one."[53]. The reviewer continues maliciously:

> We too are the wiser for our experiences. After the first lecture, we discovered that the master's pronunciation of French was rather poor, and after the second one we realized that this was also true of his pronunciation of German. Fortunately, this did not prevent us from understanding the lecture, since everything that he said has already been published several times and we have had plenty of opportunities to read it.[54]

The focal point of the article seems to be the reviewer's disapproval of some critical comments that Brandes is supposed to have made at one of the celebratory banquets. The view that Hungary was an extremely backward nation was a perfectly reasonable one, even in the opinion of *Új Idők*, but hearing this judgement from the lips of a "foreign guest" was quite unacceptable. Brandes' tactless remarks created a bad impression, writes the

reviewer, even among those who a few weeks earlier had looked up to him admiringly and sung "hosannahs" to his "shining talents". But this attitude had now changed. Brandes "the master" was now suddenly regarded as "a mediocrity who has nothing more to say ... and has no right to literary existence."[55] For although everyone agreed that Brandes was "the most eminent popularisor of Ibsen", the reviewer from *Új Idők* had to admit that "the yellowing leaves stirred gently in Brandes' laurel wreath, and this melancholy noise disturbed not only the audience, but also the person wearing the wreath."[56]

The reviewer then hastened to soften his tone, adding:

> For the truth is that Brandes is one of the leading, modern aesthetes; he has performed a great and lasting service by popularising Ibsen. His style is pleasing and his thoughts are interesting. A few of his works will outlive both the flatterers and the critics.[57]

But the perfidious style returned a few lines later. According to confidential information that had come to the ears of the author, the person giving the lecture might not have been Brandes at all, but a journalist from Berlin whose mother came from Vágujhely. In Hungary, this seemingly innocent remark would need no further explanation, since it was common knowledge that the East Hungarian town in question was famous for its large Jewish minority. But the reviewer's deliberate, though elegantly veiled, reference to Brandes' Jewish background struck a completely new note in Brandes' Hungarian reception. This little anti-Semitic barb was a new variant of the ideological problem of Hungary versus Europe, which the following passage illustrates only too well:

> Why should we invite Brandes to come here? ... Why would we invite a man whose name and fame belong to the past, who has nothing to say to us, whose activities have no real connection with us? ... Let us abandon these foolish, Balkan attitudes. We should not attempt to create intellectual life here by inviting fading, foreign celebrities.[58]

What is also revealing about the review is that it tells the reader nothing about the subject of Brandes' lecture. The theme of the lecture was not mentioned at all. The idea that it might have any relevance to the première of *Hedda Gabler* is simply dismissed, without any reasons being offered. All

things considered, it is quite obvious that the author of the article had no intention of writing a factual review; his article served completely different purposes.

Új Idők expresses one of the central contemporary problems: the burning question is still that of the creation of a national state of Hungary, independent of Austria. Ideologically speaking, the obvious solution lay in a strengthening of patriotic feeling, as opposed to cosmopolitanism. While the latter concept had positive connotations in the 1870s, when those associated with *Figyelő* created fruitful contacts with Western Europe, it acquired increasingly negative connotations after the turn of the century. It was regarded as a harmful, alien attitude that militated against the spirit of nationalism. "The language spoken in Pest is not Hungarian, the buying and selling of stocks and shares is not Hungarian, socialism is not Hungarian, the organisation of the agrarian proletariat is not Hungarian, the secularisation of education is not Hungarian. The adoption of a sceptical-ironic attitude is not Hungarian, liberal sexual policies are not Hungarian, and those who are dissatisfied with the prevailing conditions are certainly not Hungarian,"[59] writes the columnist Ignotus angrily.[60]

Behind this bitter denunciation lies the essence of the official view, ambiguously phrased here yet nevertheless clearly perceptible, that anything regarded as un-Hungarian could be attributed to the capital's modern bourgeoisie; in other words, to the assimilated Jewish bourgeoisie. At the time, this particular group not only enjoyed political equality but was also financially better off than average Christian members of the community. In this climate it was not too surprising that the nationalistic-conservative *Új Idők* should use Brandes' visit to strengthen its own ideological image.

> We must carry our national heritage from past ages, the characteristics, inclinations and talents that are associated with our race, into the modern age and make them the fertile soil for a specifially Hungarian culture. Genuine, living literature and art will partly lead and partly follow this development. We hope that as a periodical we will be able to support this literature and art and we will present it to the readers so that they would not dream of envying the foreign literature that concerns itself with an outmoded, fossilised life in what is to us an alien world.[61]

The politically more middle-of-the-road newspaper *Magyar Nemzet* (The Hungarian Nation) printed its report of Brandes' lecture with a treble headline: "Scandal at lecture evening. In the Theresianstad Casino. Brandes

disrupted."[62] The article is a report on Brandes' second lecture, organised by the Petőfi Society in support of the establishment of a house in memory of the poet Petőfi. This article had nothing to say about the content of the lecture either; it did not even mention the title of the lecture.

According to the author of the article, the Casino's assembly hall was almost empty at eight o'clock when the lecture was officially due to start, and Brandes waited for the customary extra quarter of an hour unofficially added on to the starting times of academic events before starting his lecture. The audience came drifting into the Casino and the continuous creaking of the door irritated Brandes so much that from the podium he invited anyone who did not like his lecture to leave the room. The Minister for the Interior, Count Apponyi, and his wife were embarrassed and upset by this and the general public were indignant; a few people actually left the hall at that point. The reviewer saw Brandes' behaviour as an example of "Scandinavian tactlessness" and the whole action as an "unfortunate incident". It is difficult to recognize the celebrated lecturer in this description. What had occurred was probably a convergence of a series of unfortunate circumstances. Brandes was unwell and felt disappointed at the obvious discrepancy between Elza Szász's warm, enthusiastic invitation and the lack of interest displayed by his audience. As Gertrud Rung[63] was later to record, Brandes could occasionally react with deliberate tactlessness when things went against him. If the report is to be believed, it was this unfortunate character trait that was to blame for 'the scandal'.

The treatment of Brandes' lecture on Ibsen in the radical journal *A Hét* was completely different. This article deals with Brandes' introductory talk at the Hungarian première of *Hedda Gabler*. The reviewer begins by stating that the lecture was given in French as a concession to the antipathy felt by the Hungarians towards the German language. At the same time, he relates that Brandes had been attacked in the German press for making a similar statement when, on his first visit in 1900, he openly declared his preference for French. But the author of the article is unmoved by such empty demonstrations of Hungarianism and deplores, on behalf of the audience, this meaningless choice of language.

> Those Hungarians who detest the German language listened attentively and uncomprehendingly to Brandes' lecture in French, even though they would have understood all the elegant expressions, linguistic subtleties and wit of Brandes, had it been given in German. There is nothing as absurd as extreme Hungarian chauvinism.[64]

But the Hungarian public is familiar with Brandes' books, which are accessible in German, concludes the reviewer. Unlike *Új Idők*, he emphasizes that in spite of his advanced years Brandes seems youthful and "warm". The reviewer points out that it was Brandes who aroused "the interest of the cultured world in J.P.Jacobsen, Ibsen and Søren Kierkegaard. [Brandes] has been the man of the future throughout his life and has always been interested in what is new. There is scarcely a writer, especially within Scandinavian literature, whom he has not helped achieve world fame. But Gorky and Andreyev have much to thank him for, too."[65] With this observation, the author stresses Brandes' role as a mediator, which not least in a Hungarian context has been of enormous importance. With great professional insight and scholarship, the reviewer relates the lecture on *Hedda Gabler* to Brandes' other works on Ibsen with which Hungarian readers were familiar.[66]

Anyone uncertain about the culturo-political position of *A Hét* would find the answer to this question merely by reading the article on Brandes. The editor, József Kiss, explains the position of his magazine as follows:

> Above the door to the editor's room at *A Hét*, there is a notice attached with golden nails: talent should be honoured! It is to be honoured in all its forms and shades, and if you fail to understand it immediately, then make sure that you come to understand it. In the East, the fool is honoured as saint; it is in the West that the worship of talent should be sought. This is what *A Hét* does. That may be why we are accused of being cosmopolitan.[67]

The periodical's obvious enthusiasm for Brandes had its roots in the liberal views expressed in *Figyelő* and *Élet*. In keeping with these traditions, *A Hét* deliberately adopted a broad European view and saw Hungary's intellectual future as bound up with modern intellectual currents. They gave him due credit for his fertile cosmopolitanism and regarded him as "the good European". As we have already seen, this enthusiasm for Europe provoked opposition in conservative circles. The polarisation in the periodicals is in many ways similar to the attitude of the press in Russia, where slavophile and pro-Western (*zapadnik*) sympathies, respectively, were of enormous importance in Brandes' reception.[68] In a similar vein, the Hungarian press was not slow to make use of Brandes' new visit to Budapest in order to demonstrate its political and ideological position.

In conclusion, it might be interesting to see how Brandes himself

experienced his visit to Budapest. Surprisingly enough, his own view of the visit was completely different from that of the reviewers. This can be seen, for example, in the letter he wrote to a French, female friend of his, Mme de Caillavet:

> J'arrive de Budapest où je n'avais pas cinq minutes à moi, où pendant une quinzaine je fus déchiré par des visites et des invitations dans l'aristocratie hongroise; j'y ai parlé deux fois; et les braves Magyars m'ont feté, trompé, envié à qui mieux mieux c'était un spectacle extraordinaire de suivre les intrigues par lesquelles des écrivains indigènes, qui enrageaient qu'on m'avait invité, voulaient empêcher mes conférences, sous prétexte qu'il n'y avait pas de salles assez grandes.[69]

One should not be surprised at Brandes' rather patronising, yet at the same time self-assertive description of his stay in Budapest. The same 'boastful' tone appears in the letters to his mother, Emilie Brandes, in which Brandes was often at pains to present a positive image of himself. To be sure, Brandes was courted by Budapest's bourgeois and aristocratic circles alike; his lifelong friendships and correspondences are evidence of that. But as far as Brandes' actual reception by the Hungarian mass media is concerned, the political-ideological polarisation mentioned above became increasingly pronounced with the years.

Notes to Chapter 5:

1 Lajos Hatvany (1880-1961), son of Sándor, Baron Hatvany Deutsch (1852-1913), who founded the modern sugar production in Hungary. He was ennobled in 1908. The wealthy heir, Lajos Hatvany, gave financial backing to the periodical *Nyugat*.

2 Lajos Hatvany to Georg Brandes, 29.6. 1905, Brandes Archive.

3 *Die Zukunft*, German periodical, whose articles often caused quite a stir. It was edited by Maximilian Harden (Isidor Witkowski).

4 Hatvany meant the periodical *Die Literatur. Sammlung illustrierter Einzeldarstellungen*, which Brandes published between 1904 and 1908.

5 This was published in 1900 in Paris.

6 Georg Brandes, "Corneille og Spanierne" (Corneille and the Spaniards), *SS*, 16, pp. 8-12.

7 *Ibid.*, p. 12.

8 Sándor Bródy (1863-1924) provoked a lively debate about naturalism with his first collection of short stories, *Nyomor* (Misery), from 1884.

9 Sándor Bródy, "Katusa föltámadása" (The Resurrection of Katiusha), *Fehér könyv*, 1900, 4, pp. 107-12.

10 Brandes György, "Görgei Arthur", *Jövendő*, 1903, 43, pp. 37-40.

11 Georg Brandes, "Bolondok mágnese" (Magnet for Madmen), *Jövendő*, 1904, 2, 2, pp. 30-33.

12 Vilmos Huszár to Georg Brandes, 11.12. 1902, Brandes Archive.

13 Hedda Lenkei to Georg Brandes, 1.1. 1907, Brandes Archive.

14 Hedda Lenkei to Georg Brandes, 20.1. 1907, Brandes Archive.

15 Hedda Lenkei to Georg Brandes, 1.1. 1907, Brandes Archive.

16 Georg Brandes to Mari Jászai, Ostertag 1900, OSzK.

17 Vilmos Huszár to Georg Brandes, 17.1. 1907, Brandes Archive.

18 Hedda Lenkei to Georg Brandes, 20.1. 1907, Brandes Archive.

19 Hedda Lenkei to Georg Brandes, 22.1. 1907, Brandes Archive.

20 Timo Martin & Douglas Sivén, *Akseli Gallen-Kallela, National Artist of Finland*, Helsinki 1985, p. 228.

21 Gabriel Térey, the director of the art gallery, and his wife were the hosts. See Gabriel Térey to Georg Brandes, 7.3. 1907, 26.3. 1907, and Edit Térey to Georg Brandes, 17.3. 1907, Brandes Archive.

22 Henrik Marczali to Georg Brandes, 11.2. 1907 and 7.3. 1907, Brandes Archive.

23 Henrik Ibsen, "Til Ungarn!" (For Hungary), *Samlede Værker* (Collected Works), Centenary edition, Oslo, 1937, 14, pp. 63-64.

24 Georg Brandes, *SS*, 17, p. 253.

25 *Ibid.*

26 *Ibid.*, p. 265.

27 Georg Brandes, "Ibsen Henrik és Gabler Hedda", *Az Ujság*, 1907, 5, 58.

28 *Ibid.*

29 *Ibid.* (Cited from *SS*, 3, pp. 329-30.)

30 *Ibid.* (p. 329.)

31 *Ibid.* (p. 330.)

32 Brandes György, "Ibsen Henrik és Gabler Hedda", *Az Ujság*, *op.cit.*, p. 6.

33 Benedek Marcell, "Hedda Gabler", *Magyar Nemzet*, 14.3. 1907.

34 *Pester Lloyd*, 14.3. 1907.

35 *Ibid.*

36 *Ibid.*

37 Mari Jászai to Georg Brandes, 11.3. 1907, Brandes Archive.

38 *Ibid.*

39 Georg Brandes to Mari Jászai, Ostertag 1900, OSzK.

40 Mari Jászai to Georg Brandes, 6.4. 1900, Brandes Archive.

41 Georg Brandes to Mari Jászai, 9.3. 1907, OSzK.

42 The Petőfi Society had among its members Zsigmond Bodnár, Sándor Endrődi, József Kiss, Kálmán Mikszáth, László Névy, Tamás Szana and others. They were all actively involved in Brandes' reception in Hungary.

43 Elza Szász to Georg Brandes, undated (presumably February 1907), Brandes Archive.

44 Elza Szász to Georg Brandes, (February 1907), Brandes Archive.

45 Elza Szász to Georg Brandes, 27.2. 1907, Brandes Archive.

46 *Ibid.*

47 Georg Brandes to Leontine Arman de Caillavet, *Correspondance*, *op.cit.*, 1. p. 238.

48 Georg Brandes to Leontine Arman de Caillavet, *ibid.*, p. 243.

49 Georg Brandes, "Voltaire und Friedrich der Grosse", *Pester Lloyd*, 12/13.3. 1907; *Abendblatt*, 12.3. 1907.

50 Péter Hanák, "A századelő történeti tendenciái" (Historical Tendencies at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century), *Magyarország a monarchiában*, *op.cit.*; Dominicus Kosáry, *Ungerns historia*, *op.cit.*, pp. 192ff.

51 Oszkár Jászi-Jakubovics (1875-1957), the leader and theorist of the Hungarian, bourgeois radicals. Chairman of the Radical Party's national council. Minister in the Károlyi Government in 1918. After the fall of the Hungarian Soviet Republic he emigrated, first to Vienna, then to the USA. He was deeply committed to a democratic solution to the Hungary's problems

concerning nationality.

52 [F.P.], "Brandes-látogatás" (Brandes' Visit), *Új Idők*, 1907, 12, p. 282.

53 *Ibid.*

54 *Ibid.*

55 *Ibid.*

56 *Ibid.*

57 *Ibid.*

58 *Ibid.*

59 Cited from: *A magyar irodalom története* (The History of Hungarian Literature), *op.cit.*, 4, p. 547.

60 Ignotus (pseudonym) Hugo Veigelsberg (1869-1949), author and critic. Bourgeois radical. In 1908, together with Lajos Hatvany and Miksa Fenyő, he founded the periodical *Nyugat*, and for many years he was its editor-in-chief.

61 "Az olvasóhoz" (To the Reader), *Új Idők*, 1894, 1, p. 1. Cited from: *Program és hivatás. Magyar folyóiratok programcikkeinek válogatott gyüjteménye* (Programme and Mission. A selection of programmatic articles from Hungarian periodicals), Budapest 1978, p. 309.

62 "Botrány egy felolvasáson. A Terézvárosi Kaszinóban. A megzavart Brandes." (Scandal at lecture evening. In the Theresienstad Casino. Brandes disrupted.), *Magyar Nemzet*, 13.3. 1907.

63 In 1912 Gertrud Rung became Georg Brandes' secretary.

64 "Georg Brandes", *A Hét*, 1907, 1, p. 159.

65 *Ibid.*

66 The reviewer mentions, among other things, Brandes' newly published book on Ibsen, *Henrik Ibsen. Mit 12 Briefen Henrik Ibsens. Die Literatur. Sammlung illustrierter Einzeldarstellungen*, 1906, 32 & 33.

67 József Kiss, "Egy lapról, egy évfordulóról és egy szerkesztőről" (Concerning a Periodical, a Jubilee and an Editor), *A Hét*, 1899, p. 846. Cited from: *Program és hivatás*, *op.cit.*, p. 294.

68 Lene Tybjærg Schacke, "The Ugly European?", *We and They*, *op.cit.*, 1984, pp. 119-31.

69 Georg Brandes to Léontine Arman de Caillavet, *Correspondance*, *op.cit.*, 1, p. 247.

> Negation of the precursor is never possible, since no ephebe can afford to yield even momentarily to the death instinct.
>
> Harold Bloom

CHAPTER 6

GEORG LUKÁCS - THE RELUCTANT RECIPIENT

A New Generation Grows Up

When Georg Brandes paid his first visit to Hungary in 1900, György Lukács was fifteen years old and was already an enthusiastic, discriminating reader. There was certainly no shortage of books in his well-equipped childhood home. The family lived in the best part of Lipótváros, the residential area favoured by the assimilated Jewish bourgeoisie.[1] It was here, in the Lipótváros Casino, that Brandes gave his lecture on Ibsen in 1900. Lukács' father, József, might well have been present on that occasion. At any rate, he could not have avoided reading about it in the press. *Pester Lloyd*, *A Hét* and *Budapesti Napló*, to which he subscribed, all carried reports of Brandes' visit to Budapest.

Lukács senior kept up with the latest cultural developments and also acted as patron for many of his son's gifted friends. He was a genuinely self-made man, who had obtained an important position at the Anglo-Austrian bank in Budapest by the age of twenty-four. He moved up into the urban middle class, changed his name from Löwinger to the more Hungarian-sounding Lukács, and in 1901 he was given the aristocratic title 'Szegedi' (von Szeged). Like other immigrants from Moravia, Grandfather Löwinger, an enterprising provincial artisan, was very favourably disposed towards his new country. He proudly served in the 1848-49 War of Independence and was an enthusiastic spectator at the festivities that were held to celebrate Hungary's millenium.

This meant that Lukács' father absorbed national-liberal views from his earliest years. He had a feeling of loyalty towards the new fatherland. But although he became a 'Hungarian patriot' and an integrated member of Hungarian society, he did not completely abandon his Jewish faith. The Jewishness, however, merely served as a practical framework for the family's way of life. The home in Lipótváros was characterized by a pragmatic attitude towards religion. This special constellation of Hungarianism and 'a

The young György Lukács.

show' of Jewishness, not an unusual phenonemon at the end of the 19th century, provided Lukács with his early spiritual and intellectual baggage.

There are certain indications that György Lukács had a somewhat ambivalent attitude towards his liberal father. He rightly regarded him as a member of the staid, contented bourgeoisie. With his zest for life in Hungary, József Lukács believed in the growth of economic prosperity and in political freedom. He identified with those members of the liberal middle class who were the most enthusiastic recipients of all the modern trends that came from Western Europe. But the young Lukács was dissatisfied with the pragmatic tolerance of the liberals. The younger generation, to which Lukács and his friends belonged, were looking for a new kind of liberalism. Above all, they wanted to seem unconventional and original and they condemned the older generation's penchant for traditions. And yet this younger generation was also firmly rooted in bourgeois traditions. The ties that bound them to the middle class could not be severed at one blow.

Lukács' father paid for his son's academic education and followed his progress. He wrote to his son:

> Du sagst selbst, dass ich Dir in Deiner Entwicklung und der Wahl ihrer Wege freie Hand gebe. Das tue ich bewusst, weil ich Dir unbegrenzt vertraue und Dich unendlich liebe - ich opfere alles auf, um Dich gross, annerkant, berühmt werden zu sehen, ich werde es als mein höchstes Glück empfinden wenn man von mir sagt, ich sei der Vater von Georg Lukács.[2]

In 1902, he paid for his newly-matriculated son to make the journey to Scandinavia that he had long desired. He wanted to meet Ibsen and Bjørnson. There is no evidence that Lukács had any plans to visit Brandes on this trip, but even if he had, a meeting with Brandes would not have been possible, since he was in Karlsbad at the time.[3] Unfortunately, we have no account of the visit to Ibsen, although Lukács' friends asked him to write about it:

> Dear Gyuri,
>
> It was only today that I received your letter from Kristiania containing your article about the midnight sun.[4] I would like to give you my most heartfelt congratulations on your meeting with Ibsen - "it was successful" must mean that, I suppose. I would love to have

an account of your conversation - which you probably know by heart - preferably in the original language so as not to lose any of the nuances...[5]

Although the visit to Ibsen was probably a short one, since Ibsen had recently suffered a serious stroke, the meeting with the great idol must have made a big impression on the young traveller. It seems amazing that Lukács was actually permitted access to the dramatist. It must have been Ibsen's long-standing sympathy for the Hungarians that made the visit possible. As we shall see, this visit was to have a strong influence on Lukács. Soon after returning home, he began to write theatre reviews in "the impressionistic style of Alfred Kerr"[6] which are full of literary allusions, including references to Scandinavian dramatists, notably Bjørnson and Ibsen. An article on *Peer Gynt* was published in 1903 where, with a sensitivity and maturity that belied his age, he outlined the ideas that lay behind Ibsen's dramatic poem. In many important respects, the article reflects the contemporary view of Ibsen, and a closer reading of Lukács' text reveals expressions that Brandes had used in his critique of Ibsen: that "all or nothing" is Brand's "seemingly inhuman solution" is mentioned in Brandes,[7] who also compares the two religious discussions that *Brand* and *Emperor and Galilean* offer.[8] *Per Gynt*, we are told, "is all too close to"[9] *Brand*, and he sees how Peer Gynt's personality "hardens and stiffens into egoism".[10] The fact that this youthful article contains expressions that are reminiscent of Brandes is not really of any significance, what is much more striking is how similar his ideas are to those of Brandes. Lukács' closest friends followed these literary exercises with interest. But who were the members of this inner circle? Anyone who might be considered to be a close friend had to have the same, unconventional attitude to life and culture that Lukács believed himself to have. In his *Memoirs*, he seems to be somewhat disapproving of this youthful arrogance:

Das hatte wiederum in meiner literarischen Entwicklung die weitere Konsequenz, dass ich mit jugendlicher Unverschämheit - im Alter von 18 Jahren - gegen die gesamte ungarische Kritik war.[11]

To this self-appointed group, originality was the highest virtue. We can get some idea of the kind of criteria that Lukács employed when making his selections if we eavesdrop on him as he speaks of one of his new friends: "He is our man: an anti-psychologist, an anti-positivist, a metaphysicist. He is intelligent, well-educated, and does not belong to any Hungarian group."[12]

This statement clearly reveals the intellectual-aristocratic nature of Lukács' views. He felt a strong distaste for the existing radical groups and cultivated a form of exclusiveness that only allowed such close friends as Leó Popper,[13] Marcell Benedek,[14] László Bánózi,[15] Béla Balázs[16] and Irma Seidler[17] to join in. On any given occasion they made a point of emphasizing their alienation from any form of authority and considered themselves free and uncommitted, both politically and artistically, but with a permanent base in the progressive camp. They all belonged to the second generation of the assimilated Jewish bourgeoisie.

These young people began their university studies in the first decade of the new century. The atmosphere was so tense at the time, not just at the university but throughout the whole country, that the moderate position that had earlier been associated with the old national liberals now seemed to be a practical impossibility for the young intellectuals. The problem was that of finding a way to express their oppositional views.

On reading about the youth of the subsequently world-famous Marxist philosopher and aesthete, one realizes that he felt alienated from the world of his parents. Psychological and historical explanations for this response are not difficult to find. At a time of increasing anti-Semitism and uncompromising right-wing radicalism, the second generation of middle-class Jews felt that they were in a very exposed, vulnerable position. At the beginning of the new century, the younger generation regarded both the Jewish and the Hungarian inheritances as burdens and they felt equally excluded from both camps. National liberalism had earlier opened up a new world to the liberal generation of their parents, who had delighted in the personal liberty and civil rights and had joyfully embraced European culture. This ideology seemed rather naive and old-fashioned to their successors, the younger generation.

The increasingly conservative, chauvinistic and intolerant political climate in Hungary before the First World War led to the isolation of the liberal middle class. Originally, this class had hoped to find common cause with the gentry, but that turned out to be wishful thinking. Despite the fine-sounding titles, the newly-created barons were still thought of as mere assimilants. Whether from self-deception or self-protection, the liberal middle class continued to believe in its old dreams of freedom and did not voice their opposition to the political situation that existed after the turn of the century.

Opposition did come, however, from a militant group of university educated intellectuals that included Oszkár Jászi, editor of the aptly named periodical *Huszadik Század* (The Twentieth Century), Ödön Wildner, Ervin

Szabó, József Diner-Dénes, one of Brandes' first contacts in Hungary, and many others. Like Lukács, most of them had grown up in a middle-class environment and had a Jewish background. But having been born around the year 1870, they were older than him and had begun their university studies around 1890. This gap of half a generation led to divergent views on many issues. Right from the beginning, the periodical was receptive to the latest European currents, and it published articles about and by such modern thinkers and poets as Rilke, Strindberg, Nietzsche, Simmel and, later, Bergson. There was also room for Brandes. According to its editor, *Huszadik Szádad* supplied "the ideas and ideals that stir the most radical, the most intransigent, and the most international segment of Hungarian society at the beginning of the twentieth century."[18] Lukács and his inner circle at this time, especially Béla Balázs, Anna Lesznai and Karl Mannheim, wrote prolifically for the periodical. Even so, it seems that although they felt some affinity with the radicals in their attitude to the status quo in Hungary, they were completely opposed to their fundamentally positivist agenda, both at the political and the aesthetic level. Members of the Lukács group had to acknowledge that they were outside the political factions of both the left and the right. It became increasingly clear that these young intellectuals were unable to identify with either the liberalism of their parents or the reformist views of the radicals. This made Lukács' relationship with Brandes problematic. The image of the Danish critic as a liberal, progressive person, an aristocratic radical or a political activist could simply not be squared with the horizon of expectations of György Lukács and his friends. It is not easy to think of Lukács as a committed recipient of Brandes, let alone of Brandes the liberal.

The Lukács circle regarded itself as a generation or sect with a common destiny.[19] They were 'anti-recipients' in the sense that they refused to accept prevailing literary judgements, existing movements or European celebrities. This generally negative attitude can, of course, be partly attributed to the instinctive opposition of a younger generation to their fathers, teachers and advisers. But there was more to Lukács' silence on Brandes than mere youthful rebelliousness. As a 'precursor' Brandes had been weighed and found wanting. Lukács simply did not wish to be bracketed with him. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that he is seldom referred to and that whenever he is quoted, it is to show him in an unfavourable light. The Lukács circle shared this oppositional attitude. Thus Bánóczi wrote to Lukács: "I have just bought Brandes' book on Ibsen,[20] it is just a lot of superficial nonsense, 80 pages of it. You are thankful for any clever cliché you can find. The sections that are not mediocre are simply badly written. The letters are interesting,

though, and the girl[21] even more so."[22] Lukács said nothing to contradict this.

He adopted a correspondingly antagonistic attitude towards the leading literary journals, which was of course soon noted in critical circles, where he was not exactly welcomed with open arms. Although the first essays from his early years were published in the leading literary organ of the period, *Nyugat* (The West),[23] Lukács had no wish to be identified with the literary views of that journal. With his friends, he took a pride in not belonging to the coterie attached to *Nyugat* and was therefore delighted when one of his closest friends, Leó Popper, wrote to him on his own initiative: "There is no question of any comparison between you and *Nyugat*. Your style is completely different, and whatever you discuss, the music comes from the depths of your heart - the writings of Fenyő[24] and company also come from below, but from somewhat further down."[25]

Lukács constantly protested at the principles observed by the editors; he regarded the journal as positivist and aestheticising and refused to recognize its progressive and - by Hungarian standards - cultural revolutionary stamp. In *Nyugat*, several articles about and by Brandes were published. Generally speaking, it took on the task of popularizing Scandinavian literature in Hungary.

Lukács' relationship to the politically radical, scientifically forward-looking *Huszadik Század* was just as ambivalent. Although he was on good terms with the editor, Oszkár Jászi, Lukács denounced the positivist stance of the journal. To his great chagrin, the circle around Jászi did not notice the sociological angle in his first book of criticism, *A modern dráma fejlődésének története* (A History of the Development of Modern Drama).[26] This was, if anything, an even greater source of disappointment to Lukács, since *Huszadik Század*'s special field of interest was modern sociology and the relationship between literature and society. Lukács writes:

> ...ich blieb sowohl im Kreise der *Nyugat* als in dem der *Huszadik Század* eine isolierte Erscheinung. Vergebens schnitt meine Dramengeschichte zahlreiche gesellschaftliche Fragen an, bei der positivischen Einstellung der ungarischen Soziologen erweckten diese kein Interesse.[27]

Huszadik Század published an article about Brandes' controversial book *Før og nu. To tragiske skæbner* (Past and Present. Two Tragic Fates), under the tendentious title, "The Unprecedented Reactionary View".[28]

Lukács could not avoid seeing Brandes' name or writings in *A Hét*,

Magyar Salon and *Jövendő* either. For example, Sándor Bródy's *Jövendő* published Brandes' essay on Arthur Görgei, the famous general in the War of Independence; and in the same year it published Lukács' article on Herman Bang. It was virtually impossible for Lukács not to be reminded of Brandes' existence. But Lukács regarded Brandes as a front man for a circle of admirers for whom he had no time. Thus József Diner-Dénes and Béla Lázár, who both played a leading part in Brandes' reception in Hungary and who had corresponded with the Danish critic for many years, were simply dismissed as "fools" in a letter to Leó Popper.[29]

To Lukács and his circle, Brandes' liberalism, broad-mindedness and his fight for individual freedom and freedom of thought seemed 'unthreatening' and not very original. On the whole, Brandes was not an accepted topic of conversation for the members of such radical philosophical societies as *Társadalomtudományi Társaság* (The Sociological Society), which changed its name to *Galilei Kör* (The Galilei Circle) in 1908, and the exclusive *Vasárnapi Társaság* (The Sunday Circle). In addition to those already mentioned, the art historians Lajos Fülep,[30] Arnold Hauser, Charles de Tolnay and the philosopher Karl Mannheim were also members of the society, immersing themselves in Kant, Kierkegaard, Meister Eckhart, Dostoyevsky, Dilthey, Simmel, Lask and Max Weber; to name but the most important of the intellectual influences. We can only guess at the full extent of the spiritual inspiration. At the same time, it marked a decisive break with positivism and with bourgeois culture. Lukács writes of this time of fermentation:

> Im Winter 1911-12 entstand in Florenz der erste Plan einer selbständigen systematischen Ästhetik, an deren Ausarbeitung ich mich in den Jahren 1912-14 in Heildelberg machte. Ich denke noch immer mit Dankbarkeit an das wohlwollend-kritische Interesse, das Ernst Bloch, Emil Lask und vor allem Max Weber meinem Versuch gegenüber zeigten.[31]

The years around the publication of his book on drama (1911) gradually ushered in a new phase of Lukács' intellectual development: together with his friends from the Sunday Circle, he studied metaphysical, ethical and religious issues. They translated the writings of Meister Eckhart and Plotinus, among others. The members of the Society felt themselves closely bound together in an intellectual fellowship that manifested itself in romantic, anti-capitalist attitudes and in an irrational, idealistic view of the world. Together with Lajos Fülep, Lukács founded the periodical *A Szellem*

(The Spirit), where he published his new essays, already conceived in the new spirit, which pointed in a new direction away from "the stylistic chaos of impressionism".[32] The entire development showed that Lukács and his intellectual friends could not do otherwise than reject Brandes' broadly based critique. They could not forgive Brandes' either for retaining his original belief in liberalism and for defending it at a time when the liberal society had parted company with the political and cultural ideals.

In the late of the 19th century, things had looked very different. The enlightened, liberal middle class were enthusiastic about Brandes because they saw him as their man, as the person who could fulfil the expectations of their class. Both the readers and the listeners felt that they received confirmation of their beliefs: Brandes said precisely what they themselves thought and wanted to say. A break had to be made with the isolation and provincialism of the past, the fresh winds blowing from the major European cultures should be allowed to blow through Hungary. "Like a huge gust of wind, a literary wave had swept down from the North, bringing fresh, intellectual air,"[33] wrote Stefan Zweig, pointing out in the same piece that it was Georg Brandes, the intellectual leader, who provided this freshness. The literary wave referred to by Stefan Zweig not only swept over Germany, its aftermath was also felt in Hungary.

Young Lukács, whose first language was in fact German, welcomed these new currents. He often spent lengthy periods in Berlin, where Brandes had long been a source of interest. The circle in which Lukács moved had a favourable view of the Danish literary critic. In July 1904, Lukács paid an extended visit to Berlin with his childhood friend, László Bánóczi, one of the founders of the *Thalia Society*, a theatre company. This society had the ambitious aim of wanting to create a Hungarian counterpart to such free, experimental, European theatres as *Freie Bühne* in Berlin and *Théâtre Libre* in Paris. In Berlin, the Scandinavian wave was at its height. *Freie Bühne* was showing a number of plays by Ibsen, Bjørnson and Strindberg. The energetic Otto Brahm saw to it that the theatre's magazine carried samples of Scandinavian literature and the professor of Danish at the University of Berlin published a number of translations from Danish, Swedish and Norwegian under the telling title, "Die nordische Bibliothek". There was a market for Scandinavian literature in Germany itself and throughout the German-speaking world.[34] All this naturally ensured that Lukács learnt quite a lot about contemporary Scandinavian literature. He also got hold of Strodtmann's book *Das geistige Leben in Dänemark.* Everywhere he looked in his search for modern European literature, Lukács came across the name of Brandes, directly or indirectly.

The idea of creating a so-called free theatre in Budapest, free from the petty constraints of commercial interests, had been contemplated by Lukács and his childhood friends, Marcell Benedek and László Bánóczi, since the beginning of the century. At the time, Lukács was very interested in drama as a genre and he wrote a number of reviews. He usually found performances at the National Theatre hopelessly out of date and totally devoid of ideas. He wanted to present modern drama in a new, revolutionary way. But since neither he nor Benedek had any practical experience of the theatre, he had to find an artistic director. They managed to persuade the brilliant young director at the National Theatre, Sándor Hevesi,[35] to take on the job, and *Thalia-Társaság* opened its doors on 23 November 1904.

The general aim of *Thália-Társaság* was to put on modern plays for modern audiences. So Lukács had the task of selecting a representative repertoire. Four one-act plays were presented for the opening performance, one of which was Edvard Brandes' *A Visit*. The inclusion of this particular play was no accident. It was on Otto Brahm's recommendation that this successful play, which was then conquering Europe, from Berlin to London and from Paris to Stockholm, was put on.[36] The play's treatment of sexual morality was a typical contribution to the debate on morality, which had been an important issue in Scandinavia in the late 1880s, but was an embarrassing and rather daring topic in turn-of-the-century Hungary. Brandes' play could not help but spark off a discussion among its Hungarian audience.

In 1906, Lukács' translation of Ibsen's *The Wild Duck* was performed at *Thalia*'s free theatre. We have already seen how enthusiasm for Scandinavian literature, which had been stimulated by Brandes, prompted Mari Jászai to translate *John Gabriel Borkman* and Hedvig (Hedda) Lenkei to set to work on *Hedda Gabler*. These were active efforts at communication which were now followed up on an even larger scale by *Thália-Társaság*. For the performances introduced some of Ibsen's most effective and controversial plays, such as *A Doll's House*, *The Wild Duck*, *The Master Builder* and *Ghosts*, as well as Strindberg's *The Father* and Sven Lange's *A Criminal*.[37]

These experiences, a product of the practical task of communicating literature, particularly Scandinavian literature, formed an important part of Lukács' development and became a source of inspiration. To him, realism implied disinterested, incorruptible truthfulness on the part of the author. This method seemed to be more genuine and more fundamental than political radicalism. Unlike superficial, external radicalism - Lukács explained - the modern breakthrough was like a sweeping inner radicalism, an inner revolution:

> Bewunderung für Radikalität skandinavischer und russischer Literatur (Anfänge der Wirkung Tolstojs). Das innerliche Treubleiben zum Menschenideal (Peer Gynt und Peter Martensgaard). Gegen - wenn auch radikal - "oberflächlichen" Positivismus und "innerliche" Revolution (auch wenn äussere Form nicht revolutionär). Diese Tendenzen bloss anfänglich.[38]

In these circumstances, it is understandable that the ambivalence that is present in virtually all Lukács' relationships should also characterize his attitude to Brandes. Being exceptionally well-read, Lukács was familiar with a number of Brandes' writings, and *Main Currents in 19th Century Literature* was one of his basic, literary texts. The volumes are still on view in the library of the Lukács archive. The worn condition of the books and the small, elegant pencil marks bear witness to how much they were used over the years.[39] Lukács' reluctance as a recipient is not an unusual phenonemon. All great poets experience some kind of "anxiety" when they encounter the work of a great predecessor, as Harold Bloom explains in his treatise on *The Anxiety of Influence*.[40] Admittedly, Bloom is writing about the experiences of writers of fiction, but even so, the poet's fight against the powerful influence of a poetical inheritance resembles the struggle that Lukács experienced with Brandes, his great predecessor. Fear of being thought derivative might have played a prominent part for someone like Lukács, who had striven for originality from his earliest years. Nor should it be forgotten that the remarkable number of parallels that existed between Lukács and Brandes, such as their common Jewish background, their problematic relationships to their respective native countries, the difficulties they both encountered in their academic careers because of anti-semitism and the long sojourns they both had in foreign countries, might have presented further obstacles to a natural, uncomplicated reception. By his silence on Brandes, Lukács exposed the eternal dilemma of the literary critic: where is the dividing line between an original approach to literature and that which may be seen as 'inherited' or 'assimilated'? Thus we shall see in the next section how Lukács, the reluctant Brandes recipient, was nevertheless unable to circumvent the Dane's influence as a communicator.

Lukács had a particular reason for being interested in Brandes. As has often been pointed out, the latter was the most important communicator of Scandinavian literature. This literature was a great source of inspiration to the young Lukács in his personal development. In fact, his very first literary exercises were about the writers of the Scandinavian breakthrough. One

cannot avoid coming across Brandes' name in the early writings of Lukács, in which the main focus is on Scandinavian literature.

Although, for ideological reasons, Lukács felt the need to distance himself from Brandes - the European celebrity who was lionized by the aristocracy, worshipped by the liberal bourgeoisie and admired by gifted women - Brandes did make a contribution to the Hungarian philosopher's literary and culturo-historical orientation. Lukács' problematic relationship to Brandes should be seen as a consequence of the death of liberalism. The Hungarian philosopher could no longer support an ideology that both economically and politically had moved away from its original ideals. This was a historical fact, and Lukács was conscious of the essentially preserving role that the Hungarian liberals had come to play in Hungary after the turn of the century. Consequently, the Danish critic could not be a role model for him. It is therefore appropriate to examine how Brandes' communication work actually functioned and what significance it came to have for the aesthetic and philosophical writings of György Lukács.

In the Sign of Scandinavian Literature

In his autobiographical essay, *Gelebtes Denken* (1971), Lukács relates that when still at grammar school he suddenly "discovered" Scandinavian literature. "On a shelf in my father's library, I found Nordau's *Entartung*," he writes. "It only needed a 180 degree turn to arrive at Baudelaire, Verlaine, Swinburne, Zola, Ibsen and Tolstoy."[41] From the point of view of reception history, this detail fits well into the finished picture. It tells us something about the mental baggage that young intellectuals from rather wealthy homes could be expected to carry around with them at the beginning of the 20th century. The person whom Lukács, in his autobiographical account, calls the inadvertent "inspirer" of his later literary sympathies, is only given a modest place in literary histories today, and yet Lukács mentions the German-Jewish writer and physician Max Nordau every time he refers to his first encounter with Scandinavian literature. Of course, it comes as both a surprise and a disappointment to us that it is Nordau's name, not that of Brandes, that crops up in this context, especially since we know that the Danish critic's mediation of Scandinavian literature played such an important part in the formation of literary taste around the turn of the century.

Nevertheless, there are some details in Lukács' description that are worth paying close attention to: there lurks a conscious rebellion behind his words when he records Nordau's diagnosis of contemporary literature, for the latter professed to show that all modern writers, from Nietzsche to Tolstoy and

from Ibsen to Verlaine, were psychopaths. "As a sheltered child from an upper-middle-class family, I did not even know the names of these writers. Nordau opened up a new world to me. His denunciations did not disturb me in the least; on the contrary, it was from his extensive quotations that I learnt what the writers who came under attack here really stood for."[42]

Here Lukács appears in the role of reluctant recipient, the 'anti-recipient'. He was undoubtedly made aware of the new currents via Nordau's notorious interpretation of modern European literature, but he does not accept Nordau's condemnatory criticism; Lukács is usually on his guard when confronted with statements from the so-called 'authorities'. He immediately takes up a polemical position and opposes them. The same polemical style is used in an interview from 1966, in which Lukács describes his relationship to Scandinavian literature: "I read Nordau from beginning to end, and from his book I learnt how sickeningly decadent Ibsen, Tolstoy etc. were. Fortunately, Nordau provided quotations from these authors, which fired my enthusiasm and helped to develop my great interest in Tolstoy and Ibsen."[43]

The formulation used by Lukács in *Gelebtes Denken* (written on his sick bed, shortly before his death) exists in an earlier version. In 1918, Lukács expressed himself in similar terms when asked about his favourite reading matter, in connection with an opinion poll:

> The first epoch-making book for me was Ibsen's *Ghosts*, which changed the direction and style of my reading at one stroke. It is partly thanks to him that I became acquainted with modern literature (especially with Ibsen's other works, and with Hauptmann and Strindberg) ... Ibsen led me to Hebbel ... For me, as for others, the years spent at university meant more wide-ranging reading ... It was then that I got to know the works of Kierkegaard, which have followed me ever since in my development.[44]

These remarks tell us quite a lot about György Lukács the recipient. We see the young, inquisitive student who devoured everything he encountered. But he steered clear of all literary tendencies or schools. His 'anti-reception' stance is thus a constant refrain in all his memoirs and this may be why the name of Brandes only occurs in one particular comment that Lukács, after all, added to *Gelebtes Denken*. This is a short *addendum*, written on a separate sheet, which carries the heading, "Bemerkungen zur Autobiographie". The *addendum* consists of a collection of associations in 'telegramese'. There are three short sections, the first of which deals with childhood memories. The second section tells of the young Lukács'

opposition to the cultural pattern and moral code of his family. The third section is concerned with the intellectual development of the author:

> Lamb. Shakespeare (I did not understand it - for a long time: Schiller - opponent). Auerbach's Spinoza; transfer to Haeckel-Darwin. Grüne Heinrich, Hermann und Dorothea, Iphigenia. Nordau's Entartung, before this Swinburne, Verlaine, Baudelaire, afterwards - in the centre - Ibsen. Behind: Hebbel, ahead: Hauptmann and Strindberg; *Through Brandes* [my emphasis - ZBA]: Kierkegaard (this prevents any influence by Nietzsche and Schopenhauer on me).[45]

Interestingly enough, the name Brandes thus appears in *Gelebtes Denken*, not in connection with Ibsen, as one might have expected, but in connection with Kierkegaard. Lukács again discusses his attitude towards the Danish philosopher in an interview from 1966 where he says:

> I would just like to record here the shock that the meeting with Ibsen's works had on me ... Ibsen was also to have an important indirect influence on my development then, since *it was he who drew my attention to Kierkegaard* [my emphasis - ZBA]. My reading of Kierkegaard when I was a student and when I was writing my first literary exercises, placed me in opposition to many of my contemporaries, since they were primarily under the influence of Nietzsche and Schopenhauer. My immersion in Kierkegaard prevented me from being influenced in the same way. Schopenhauer and Nietzsche have played virtually no part in my development.[46]

The similarity of these two extracts is striking. Yet, there are discrepancies on certain important points. In the second quotation it is *Ibsen*, not Brandes, who is named as the mediator of Kierkegaard. Which is the correct version?

When trying to answer questions of this type, one may easily be faced with problems to which there are simply no clear-cut solutions. For a subconscious 'internalization' of the really great impressions that a reader/critic receives often takes place. In other words, the person affected often cannot decide how he received his new impulses. In many cases it is also difficult to point to *where* precisely, in writings on literary criticism, inspirations actually come from. In the case of Lukács, however, we know about his personal involvement with Ibsen. This is revealed in his

publications between 1903 and 1908. In 1903 his review of *Peer Gynt* appeared, which had just come out in book form. The young writer calls Ibsen "the prophet of individualism"[47] and draws attention to the thematic connection between *Brand*, *Peer Gynt*, and *Emperor and Galilean*, as does Brandes in his Ibsen essays.[48] The 'prophet' Brand thunders at the "semi-human beings", i.e. ordinary human beings, and demands the same sacrifices from them as he does from himself, "all or nothing".[49] Peer Gynt is a response to Brand's existential problem: "ruthless egoism"[50] only brings unhappiness and stunts the growth of the true personality. Lukács sees a similar destruction of personality in *Emperor and Galilean*, where Julian rejects the task that he has been called upon to carry out. It is precisely this 'choice' that seals his destruction. In 1907, Lukács published a long essay on Ibsen in the periodical *Huszadik Század*. It is about Ibsen's technical mastery in his creation of the perfect analytical play - a subject that he had dealt with in some depth in his prize dissertation. In 1908, Lukács' review of books on Ibsen[51] was published, where he refers to "recent literature on Ibsen", which gives him a reasonable excuse for not mentioning Brandes.

Nevertheless, there are clear indications that Georg Brandes' articles on Ibsen, to a large degree, had a catalytic effect on Lukács. It is interesting to note that in all probability Brandes not only acted as a direct guide to Kierkegaard - primarily via his dissertation on Kierkegaard from 1879 - but also indirectly, through his articles on Ibsen, helped kindle Lukács' enthusiasm for the philosopher.

From a reception point of view, according to which one assumes that what interested contemporary readers was also influential and stimulated debate, one can confidently claim that Brandes' introduction of Ibsen was an important event on the European literary scene. Brandes also helped determine how Ibsen was received in Hungary. Like many of his contemporaries, Lukács was familiar with Brandes' essay on Ibsen in *Moderne Geister* and with his book on Ibsen. Tangible evidence of this exists, in the shape of the copy of *Moderne Geister* from 1901 in the Lukács library, while the book on Ibsen formed a familiar subject for discussion in Lukács' inner circle, albeit one with negative overtones. Further evidence can be found in the list of books that Lukács included in the comprehensive bibliography of his prize dissertation on modern European drama, *A drámaírás főbb irányai a múlt század utolsó negyedében* (Main Trends in Dramatic Literature during the Last Quarter of the 19th Century).

With surprising confidence, the youthful Lukács outlines developments in European drama in the late 19th century, based on a series of portraits of the most important dramatists of the age, arranged in chronological order.

However, most of these portraits do not make much of an impression (e.g. those of Scribe, Augier and Sardou) because they are too superficial and too tendentious. But one portrait has endured and can still be read with enjoyment: Lukács' portrait of Ibsen.

The original prize dissertation, which unfortunately has not been preserved in its entirety, opens with a general introduction to the genre, where Lukács writes about Hebbel, the father of modern drama. This is followed by a section on the French *comédie des moeurs*. After that comes the weightiest chapter, the one on Ibsen, and the book is rounded off with a survey of European drama right up to Lukács' own time. Since the dissertation was regarded as a scholarly thesis, it includes a detailed bibliography, listing 546 sources. The name that appears most frequently is that of Brandes. This is particularly interesting in view of Lukács' lukewarm attitude to the Danish critic. In effect, Brandes' works are referred to in the sections on Dumas the Younger, Bjørnson, Zola, Goncourt, Becque, Schnitzler, Gorky and, above all, Ibsen.[52] The most frequently cited Brandes sources are the essay collections *Gestalten und Gedanken*, *Gegenden und Menschen*, *Moderne Geister* and *Menschen und Werke*, plus the fifth volume of the German version of Brandes' works.

The title of the prize dissertation was set by the Kisfaludi Society in 1906,[53] and Lukács was encouraged to try his hand at it by his friend, László Bánóczi. "Dear Gyuri," he wrote, "I read in the afternoon edition of 'Magyarország' that the Kisfaludi Society is going to set the following subject for a prize dissertation: 'Main Trends in Modern Dramatic Literature in the Last Quarter of the 19th Century.' I wonder what excuse you will use this time? You have now spent more than a year abroad working on this very subject. So you have no excuse."[54] Lukács won first prize and soon afterwards began to revise the dissertation, which was finally published in 1911 under the title, *A modern dráma fejlődés története* (The Historical Development of Modern Drama).

The central chapter of the book (two chapters in the prize dissertation), on Ibsen, deals partly with the development of the Norwegian dramatist, seen against the background of his works, and partly with his position in the historical development of modern drama. For Lukács, Ibsen was the greatest poet of individualism and he draws our attention to the playwright's tragic view of life. This approach had its origins in Brandes' dissertation from 1883.[55] Here Brandes writes that "nobody believes in the rights and abilities of the liberated individual in the way that Ibsen does."[56] Furthermore, Brandes continues, Ibsen believes "that in order to develop everything that they have been given as a fertile possibility, each individual must above all

be free, must stand alone, and must therefore be on guard against the dangers that are inherent in any union, even in friendship or in marriage."[57] The essay concludes by claiming that "he drives his individualism to its uttermost limits",[58] going further than Søren Kierkegaard even.

Like Brandes, Lukács traces a line of development in Ibsen: from being the imitator of Scribe, Henrik Hertz and Oehlenschläger, he went on to become the most distinguished representative of modern drama. His information about Ibsen's literary background came from Brandes' "Third Impression" of Ibsen from 1898, where Brandes writes: "The verse, the vocabulary, the tone ... reveal a young, enthusiastic disciple of the aged Oehlenschläger,"[59] and Henrik Hertz' *Sven Dyrings Hus* is mentioned "as a possible source of inspiration for *The Feast at Solhaug*".[60] But Ibsen was able to free himself from these influences, and his great technical mastery came to overshadow both the French and the Danish dramatists as well as Hebbel. Lukács considers the plays of Hebbel "more universal and symbolic than those of Ibsen", but Ibsen's plays are "more complex ... there is more life in them".[61] On the subject of this 'kinship' Brandes is more cautious. "Henrik Ibsen bears no resemblance to any living writer and he has not been influenced by anyone", though one might possibly mention "two now deceased German writers, Otto Ludwig and Friedrich Hebbel, who in any case are much less modern than he."[62]

In his roughly chronological survey of the works, Lukács points out that even the thematically less interesting texts carry the hallmarks of the entire canon. Ibsen's first play, *Catilina*, writes Lukács, is "an anarchistic revolution against the entire, existing order",[63] while Brandes writes that "there is a revolutionary element in these [youthful works]".[64]

According to Lukács, the essence of Ibsen's development lies in the actual dialectic process: his reply in turn becomes a new question so that "every stage [appears] as something new, compared with what has gone before - the precondition contains the consequence."[65] Here, Lukács is paraphrasing the Kierkegaardian 'stages', which he deliberately uses when outlining Ibsen's development. Kierkegaard's philosophy is woven into the analyses of Ibsen.

Even in his first treatise on Ibsen from 1867, Brandes notes a strong influence from Kierkegaard. "Ibsen follows in the footsteps of Kierkegaard;[66] this is particularly true of *Brand* and *An Enemy of the People*."[67]

> Almost every important thought in [Brand] can be found in Kierkegaard, and the life of the hero is modelled on his life. It seems as though Ibsen actually aspired to the honour of being called Kierkegaard's poet.[68]

There is good reason to suppose that Brandes' many references to Kierkegaard in his treatises on Ibsen aroused the interest of Lukács and encouraged him to examine the relationship between the Danish philosopher and the Norwegian dramatist. Thus, indirectly, it was Ibsen who 'led' Lukács to Kierkegaard. However, it is quite justifiable to assign an important role to Brandes in Lukács' reception of Kierkegaard. In other words, Lukács' lapses of memory are of little consequence. It does not really matter whether it was Brandes or Ibsen who opened Lukács' eyes to Kierkegaard, since both the direct and the indirect revelation of ideological influences from Kierkegaard on Ibsen led to Lukács' desire to study the subject in even greater depth and to the opening up of new perspectives for him.

In his interpretation of Ibsen's plays, Lukács accepts that the struggle for the "demand of the ideal" is a *sine qua non* for Ibsen's characters, but that the outcome of the struggle is of no real importance since it is the struggle itself that is the purpose of life. This statement was the cornerstone of Brandes' interpretation. Thus he quotes a letter from Ibsen, in which the Norwegian dramatist writes: "I have to say that the only thing I love about freedom is the struggle for it; I'm not really interested in possessing it..."[69] Lukács thought this quotation so significant that he repeated it with reference to the correspondence between Ibsen and Brandes. His paraphrase of Ibsen's words was: "Freedom only has any real meaning if we yearn for it, and anyone who feels differently is carrying a dead weight in his hand."[70] Ibsen's great dramatic works express a hopeless struggle for the ideal, says Lukács, acknowledging, like Brandes, that when Ibsen looks at the age he lives in, he sees only decay where the ideal is doomed to defeat. The only thing he actually believes in is the personality, the individual. Ibsen admits, in a letter to Brandes, which is quoted in the essay, "I have never had any strong feelings of solidarity ... and if one had but the courage to ignore it completely, one would perhaps be completely rid of the ballast that weighs most heavily on the personality..."[71] The depth of the impact of that quotation on Lukács can clearly be seen in the fact that he repeats it in Hungarian.[72] He adds, with a certain amount of resignation, that nobody has seen as clearly as Ibsen did all the traps into which the individualist must almost inevitably fall. In Brandes' view, individualism and the urge for freedom are in Ibsen forced into a kind of "aristocratism". Lukács adopted

this view. He says that when Ibsen's original "propagandistic and revolutionary romanticism" was transformed into aristocratism it is essentially to be seen as a kind of resignation. His aristocratic individualism is only aristocratic for want of anything better; and the dramatist is himself conscious of the problematic nature of his attitude.[73] Even at this point, Lukács makes a clear distinction between realism and naturalism. Ibsen, he says, has never gone in for naturalism although he was hailed as a naturalist in Germany and in Scandinavia in the 1880s. Ibsen's greatest virtue, according to the young Lukács, is that in his plays he succeeds in elevating "the events of everyday life to symbolic heights".[74]

After receiving the Kisfaludy Society's prize, Lukács began to revise the drama book, but it was a great strain. As he wrote to his friend, Leó Popper:

> Unfortunately, the work on the book is going very slowly. At the moment I am rewriting Hebbel. But I am finding it very difficult ... I suspect that I could strike a new tone in essays, and I would like to write a few ... During the past few days I have wondered what would happen if I were to publish my essays ... And if the whole collection were to be called: *The Soul and the Forms*.[75]

The young Lukács wrote an essay on *Søren Kierkegaard and Regine Olsen*, which is reminiscent of the chapter "Forlovelse og Brudd" (Betrothal and Break-up) in Brandes' thesis.[76] Kierkegaard, like Ibsen, was introduced to the German public in a monograph by Brandes in 1879. Brandes was the first person to recognize the importance of his brilliant fellow-countryman. Through him, the Danish philosopher was to have great influence in the nineties and at the beginning of the new century. When Kierkegaard was quoted at a later date, it was often with reference to Brandes' thesis. In *Gelebtes Denken*, Lukács refers to the Danish critic, who had led him to Kierkegaard.

At the time, the relationship between Søren Kierkegaard and Regine Olsen had a personal significance for Lukács. He could identify on many points with Kierkegaard's painful, but firm decision finally to break off his engagement to his fiancée. This essay, which is the weightiest one in the *Lélek és Formák* (The Soul and the Forms) collection from 1910, is dedicated to Irma Seidler, the great love of Lukács' life. However, he saw no alternative to breaking off their relationship since "marriage was an impossibility".[77]

The German edition of Lukács' essay collection The Soul and the Forms. *This is the book in which Lukács published his treatise on "Søren Kierkegaard and Regine Olsen". Lukács dedicated the thesis to his fiancée, Irma Seidler, his engagement to whom he broke off, just as Kierkegaard had broken off his engagement to Regine Olsen. The cover of Lukács' book was designed by Irma Seidler.*

Kierkegaard's breaking off of his engagement was, in Lukács' view, a gesture. "Gesture is the only leap," writes Lukács, "by which man leaves all the relative aspects of reality behind and achieves the eternal security of forms. Gesture is the leap where the absolute becomes the reality of life."[78] The young philosopher explains that gesture is a movement that expresses something unambiguous, just as "form is the only expression of the absolute".[79] "Kierkegaard's heroism", Lukács continues, "can be seen in his desire to create form out of life. His sincerity lay in his attempt to find crossroads and to follow his chosen path right to the end."[80] This was also the aim of the young Lukács at that time, so he read Brandes' thesis within a specific horizon of experience. Lukács' own situation in life gave an added intensity to the reading.

In 1906, while Lukács was working on his prize dissertation, he published an essay that was more theoretical in nature than his other articles (mainly reviews) from this early period. The essay dealt with his favourite topic: modern European drama, a subject to which he constantly returned. It is clear that Lukács had already conceived his theory of realism.

In his essay "The Form of Drama" from 1906, Lukács writes:

> It is the physical framework of drama that excludes the masses; they are replaced by types and a number of characters are created ... If a novelist had written *Rosmersholm*, the entire Conservative Party and Radical Party would be parading past us, and the political struggle, which - together with Rosmer's house - constitutes the world of Rosmerholm, would be played out before our eyes. Ibsen has drawn Kroll and Mortensgaard in such a way that through their characters we see all their petty conflicts. This is the paradox that is part of character portrayal in drama. The characters have no individuality; they do not exist in their own right; their sole function is to represent; they are types. And yet they are not types; for drama presents us with the whole of life and types, as such, do not exist, just individuals. The characters in a play are simultaneously both completely typical and completely individual.[81]

Realistic literature received its first written manifesto in George Brandes' essay, *Det uendeligt Smaa og det uendeligt Store i Poesien* (The Infinitely Small and the Infinitely Great in Poetry) (1869). This work sets the standard for individualisation, sensuality, accurate observation, representation of reality and historical perspective. Brandes' reading of the concrete and the individual that represent or symbolize the general or the typical, which was

launched in this essay, influenced the 21-year-old Lukács on important points. It is also interesting to note that Lukács, like Brandes, applies the theory to the genre of drama.

There are certainly striking parallels in the respective approaches of the two critics to the concept of "the typical and the individual in the delineation of character". Lukács' use of the terms "individuality" and "type" have prompted many scholars to see a direct line of connection to Brandes. The concept of influence and inspiration contains many dubious elements, however. For no human being, let alone a critic, stands alone since we all build on a common cultural background, and the closer we stand to each other in time and space the higher the degree to which we share the same assumptions.

Within the field of Danish Marxist criticism, a number of scholars have pointed to a spiritual affinity between Lukács and Brandes. Sven Møller Kristensen makes this function explicit when he writes that "Brandes contributed to the Hungarian aesthete's theory of realism".[82] He goes on to explain that realism, as a manifesto, is present in all Brandes' work, and "the same view ... can be found in the celebrated Hungarian Marxist Georg Lukács' interpretation of 'the great realism' in Balzac and Stendhal: the living individualities as types representing the most important movements of their time and society."[83] John Chr. Jørgensen, too, in his account of positivist and critical realism, shows how Georg Brandes anticipated what "the Marxist literary critic Georg Lukács later developed into a theory of good art, i.e. realism".[84]

As we can see, scholars have concentrated their attention on the period in the thirties and forties, when Lukács lived in exile in the Soviet Union. From 1933 to 1940 he worked for the Russian periodical *Literaturnyi kritik*. It was mainly in this organ that his theoretical writings on the nature of realism were published. The treatise *Istoricheskiy roman* (The Historical Novel) was also published there in 1937-38. The most central articles on the nature of realism, such as the article on *Balzac* from 1935, *The Debate between Balzac and Stendhal* from the same year, *Tolstoy and the Development of Realism* (1940) and the *Zola* article from the same year, first saw the light of day in the columns of *Literaturnyi kritik*. In these essays, we see the 50-year-old Lukács in the process of developing further his theory on the nature of realism. It is worth noting in this connection that it was in these years that he acquired Brandes' *Menschen und Werke* from one of Moscow's second-hand bookshops.[85] This volume contains sensitive portraits of Zola, Maupassant, Pushkin and Lermontov, Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy, J.P. Jacobsen, Strindberg, as well as Brandes' critique of naturalism, the essay *Dyret i*

Mennesket (The Animal in Man).

The years in exile are traditionally considered to be the third period in the development of Lukács' theory of aesthetics. In this period, to which the theoretical treatment of the problems of realism and the theory of mimesis and commitment in literature belong, we meet Lukács the politically trained Marxist. Any discussion of the relationship between the ways in which the Danish and the Hungarian critic perceived realism will therefore appear in another perspective if we focus on 'the young Lukács', whose views on these matters were already expounded in the period between 1902 and 1918.

These sixteen years have increasingly attracted the attention of scholars, especially since the opening of Lukács' long-forgotten bank box in Heidelberg[86] in 1973, when a suitcase was discovered, containing important materials in the form of personal letters and unpublished manuscripts. Lukács had taken the suitcase to the bank, on 7 November 1917, at the end of his sojourn abroad and then completely 'forgotten' about it. In his maturity Lukács apparently had no longer any use for the documents of his youth.

Several factors influenced the way Lukács received Brandes. Like other intellectuals throughout Europe, Lukács had read Brandes, and this reading had given him a greater understanding particularly of Scandinavian literature, which was given a lot of publicity in Hungary at the beginning of the century in such leading, modernist periodicals as *Nyugat* and *Huszadik Század*. There was also a constant flow of translations of a wide selection of Scandinavian writers. Brandes had written about some of them in German-language media, with which Lukács and his friends were obviously familiar. Brandes was an outstanding reader of texts, and some of his original observations may be assumed to have taken root in the mind of the young philosopher.

But Brandes represented a critical practice that Lukács wished to break away from. To members of the group that surrounded Lukács, whether personal friends or soulmates from the various philosophical societies, Brandes simply seemed uninteresting and old-fashioned. All were anti-positivists and they all regarded Brandes' liberal, left-wing Hegelian approach as something of an anachronism. Nevertheless, the young Lukács does appear to have been influenced by Brandes, whom Lukács remembered when, at the age of eighty-six, he was writing his memoirs, *Gelebtes Denken*.

There is no doubt at all that Lukács was familiar with the writings of Brandes. He not only knew them, he actually studied them when writing his prize dissertation on the development of European drama. We know this because of the notes and pencil underlinings in the books by Brandes that

still stand on the shelves of Lukács' private library in the elegant flat on the banks of the Danube. It is not really possible to arrive at any far-reaching conclusions on the basis of these notes, most of which are found in the six volumes of *Main Currents*, in *Moderne Geister* and in *Menschen und Werke*. But they do provide evidence that the books were used.

As we have seen, the young Lukács wrote his literary and aesthetic apprentice work on one theme: Scandinavian literature.[87] There are various channels via which he might have obtained his knowledge, but Brandes' mediation must certainly have played a role. Lukács was in a real sense a reluctant recipient, for whom the adopted oppositional stance took on an existential meaning.

The politician István Tisza in action.

Notes to Chapter 6:

1 The biographical information about Lukács is based on "Eine Autobiographie im Dialog", ed. István Eörsi, in: Georg Lukács, *Gelebtes Denken*, Frankfurt am Main 1980.

2 József Lukács to György Lukács, 23.8. 1909. Cited from: *Lukács György levelezése* (Georg Lukács' Correspondence), ed. Éva Fekete & Éva Karádi, Budapest 1981, p. 147. Transl. by Miklós Pogány,

3 After 1901, Brandes spent a month every summer in Karlsbad, together with the French statesman, Clémenceau. See Per Dahl and John Mott, "Georg Brandes - a bio-bibliographical survey", *The Activist Critic*, *op.cit.*, p. 322.

4 This article has been lost.

5 Marcell Benedek to György Lukács, 20.8. 1902, *Lukács György levelezése*, *op.cit.*, p. 39.

6 *Emlékezések* (Memoirs), ed. Erzsébet Vezér, Budapest 1967, p. 17.

7 Georg Brandes, *SS*, 3, p. 292.

8 *Ibid.*, p. 300.

9 *Ibid.*, p. 269.

10 *Ibid.*, p. 270.

11 György Lukács, *Emlékezések*, *op.cit.*, p. 17. Transl. by Miklós Pogány.

12 György Lukács to Lajos Fülep, 9.11. 1910, *Lukács György levelezése*, *op.cit.*, p. 267.

13 Leó Popper (1886-1911), one of Lukács' closest soulmates, art critic, aesthete.

14 Marcell Benedek (1886-1969), founder of the Thália Society, literary historian and translator.

15 László Bánóczi (1884-1945), director of plays.

16 Béla Balázs (Herbert Bauer) (1884-1949), poet, writer, later film aesthete; together with Lukács, he worked for the periodicals *Renaissance* and *Szellem* (The Spirit).

17 Irma Seidler (1883-1911), painter, belonged to the *Nyolcak* group (The Eight, The Hungarian Fauvists).

18 Oszkár Jászi, "Tíz év" (Ten Years), *Huszadik Század*, 11, 1-6 (1910), 2.

19 See *Balázs Béla levelei Lukács Györgyhöz* (B.B.'s Letters to G.L.), MTA Filozófiai Intézet, Budapest 1982, p. 140.

20 Georg Brandes, "Henrik Ibsen. Mit 12 Briefen Henrik Ibsens", *op.cit.*

21 The 18-year-old Austrian girl, Emilie Bardach, who became the muse of the ageing Ibsen. Their letters to each other were published by Georg Brandes after Ibsen's death.

22 László Bánóczi to György Lukács, 5.8. 1906, *Lukács György levelezése*, *op.cit.*, p. 45.

23 *Nyugat* was founded in 1908 and existed until 1941. It was the most important literary journal to date. Its editor-in-chief, Hugó Ignotus, managed to attract the best talents to his periodical, which became the mouthpiece of the avant-garde in Hungary. At the same time, *Nyugat* published a rich, representative selection of foreign literature.

24 Miksa Fenyő (1877-1972), literary critic, founder of *Nyugat*, later one of its editors.

25 Leó Popper to György Lukács, 16.8. 1908, *Lukács György levelezése*, *op.cit.*, p. 74.

26 This work was published in Budapest in 1911. It is a revised version of *A drámaírás főbb irányai* (Main Trends in Dramatic Literature) (1909). It was, in particular, the social preconditions of drama that engaged Lukács at this time.

27 Georg Lukács, *Magyar irodalom - magyar kultúra. Válogatott tanulmányok* (Hungarian literature - Hungarian culture. Selected essays), Budapest 1969, p. 11. Transl. by Miklós Pogány.

28 Antal Sándor, "A hallhatatlan reakció", *Huszadik Század*, 1912, 1, pp. 407-9.

29 György Lukács to Leó Popper, 18.1. 1910, *Lukács György levelezése*, *op.cit.*, p. 171. This describes a debate evening organised by the student organisation *The Galileo Circle*, at which the artistic ideas and techniques of the most important post-impressionist group in Hungary "The Eight" (*Nyolcak*) were discussed. Lukács started off the debate and Karl Kernstock, the artistic leader of the group, performed the summing up. "Between our own contributions, such fools as Lázar and Diner had their say..."

30 Lajos Fülep (1885-1970), philosopher and art historian. Active member of the Humanities Free School (*Szellemi Tudományok Szabadiskolája*) 1917-18. Between 1920-1947, provincial pastor of the Reformed Church. He lived in internal exile until his death.

31 Georg Lukács, *Die Eigenart des Ästhetischen*, Vorwort, Neuwied 1963, p. 31.

32 Leó Popper, cited from Mary Gluck, *Georg Lukács and his Generation. 1900-1918*, London 1985, p. 19.

33 Stefan Zweig, "J.P. Jacobsen, Niels Lyhne", *Europäisches Erbe*, ed. R. Friedenthal, Frankfurt am Main 1960, p. 138.

34 Klaus Bohnen, *Der Essay als kritischer Spiegel*, Hain 1980, p. III.

35 Sándor Hevesi (1873-1939), director of plays, drama critic, the Hungarian disciple of Max Reinhardt and Stanislavsky.

36 Kristian Hvidt, *Edvard Brandes. Portræt af en radikal blæksprutte* (Edvard Brandes. Portrait of a Radical Octopus), Copenhagen 1987, pp. 177ff.

37 See Ferenc Katona & Tibor Dénes, *A Thália története* (The History of Thalia), Budapest 1954, pp. 156-62.

38 Georg Lukács, *Gelebtes Denken*, Frankfurt am Main 1980, p. 248.

39 In the private library of the Lukács archive in Budapest, the following works by Brandes can be found: *Die Hauptströmungen der Literatur des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*, Berlin 1924; *Menschen und Werke*, Frankfurt am Main 1884; *Goethe*, Berlin 1922; *Voltaire*, Berlin 1923; *Moderne Geister*, Frankfurt am Main 1901. As far as the date of Lukács' acquisition of Brandes' works is concerned, we have to go by the date of publication of the books in question. This is not always the decisive factor, however, and can even in some cases be downright misleading, since Lukács not infrequently had to acquire the same volume several times. This is due to the fact that he often took his reference books with him on voluntary and enforced trips abroad, and he could not always bring the books back with him at the end of the journey.

40 Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence*, New York 1973.

41 György Lukács, "Megélt gondolkodás" (Gelebtes Denken), *Curriculum vitae*, Budapest 1982, p. 14.

42 György Lukács, "A skandináv irodalom szerepe fejlődésemben" (The Importance of Scandinavian Literature in my Development), *ibid.*, p. 271.

43 *Ibid.*, pp. 486-87.

44 Béla Kőhalmi, *Könyvek Könyve* (The Book of Books), Budapest 1918, pp. 166-67.

45 György Lukács, "Megélt gondolkodás", *op.cit.*, pp. 484-85.

46 György Lukács, "A skandináv irodalom...", *op.cit.*, p. 271.

47 György Lukács, *Ifjúkori müvek* (Juvenilia), Budapest 1977, p. 49. The article was originally published in *Nemzeti iskola* (The National School), a supplement of *Magyar Világ* (Hungarian World), 25.1. 1903.

48 Georg Brandes, *SS*, 3, p. 269 and p. 300.

49 György Lukács, *Ifjukori müvek*, *op.cit.*, p. 48.

50 *Ibid.*, p. 49.

51 "Könyvek Ibsenről" (Books on Ibsen), *Nyugat*, 16.11. 1908, I. 22., pp. 390-92.

52 See the bibliography in György Lukács, *A drámairás főbb irányai a*

múlt század utolsó negyedében, Budapest 1907, MS.; reprinted in the series *Lukács György hagyatékából* (G.L.'s Posthumous Papers), Budapest 1980, pp. 131-64.

53 The prize dissertation was set in 1904, but since only one entry was submitted before the deadline, the committee agreed to set a new dissertation. This time there were two entries. On 5 February, 1908, the adjudicating committee (Bernát Alexander, Frigyes Riedl and Zsolt Beöthy) announced their decision. The prize of 1,000 Hungarian crowns went to Lukács.

54 László Bánóczi to György Lukács, 5.8. 1906. *Lukács György levelezése*, *op.cit.*, p. 45.

55 Georg Brandes, "Henrik Ibsen", *Nord und Süd*, 1883, pp. 247-250.

56 Georg Brandes, *SS*, 3, p. 280.

57 *Ibid.*, p. 291.

58 *Ibid.*, p. 288.

59 *Ibid.*, p. 312.

60 *Ibid.*, pp. 314-15.

61 György Lukács, *A drámaírás főbb irányai...*, *op.cit.*, p. 109.

62 Georg Brandes, *SS*. 3, p. 310.

63 György Lukács, *A drámaírás főbb irányai...*, *op.cit.*, p. 93.

64 Georg Brandes, *SS*, 3, p. 242.

65 György Lukács, *A drámairás főbb irányai...*, *op.cit.*, p. 93.

66 Georg Brandes, *SS*, 3, p. 298.

67 *Ibid.*, p. 324.

68 *Ibid.*, p. 257.

69 Georg Brandes, *SS*, 3, p. 287.

70 György Lukács, *A drámaírás főbb irányai...*, *op.cit.*, p. 262.

71 Georg Brandes, *SS*, 3, p. 307.

72 György Lukács, *A drámaírás főbb irányai...*, *op.cit.*, p. 262.

73 *Ibid.*, p. 264.

74 *Ibid.*, p. 126.

75 György Lukács to Leó Popper, 22.5. 1909, *Lukács György levelezése*, *op.cit.*, p. 215.

76 Georg Brandes, *Søren Kierkegaard. En kritisk Fremstilling Grundrids* (Søren Kierkegaard. A Critical Sketch) (1877), *SS*, 2, pp. 285ff.

77 Among the letters from Irma Seidler, which were left in a bank box in Heidelberg, there was a note with the words: "My nature, which lacks something. Scruples: (the impossibility of marriage)", *Lukács György levelezése*, *op.cit.*, p. 15.

78 György Lukács, "Søren Kierkegaard és Regine Olsen", *op.cit.*, p. 288.

79 *Ibid.*, p. 287.

80 *Ibid.*, p. 301.

81 György Lukács, "A dráma formája" (The Form of Drama), *Ifjúkori müvek, op.cit.*, p. 108.

82 Carl Erik Bay, "Georg Brandes in der marxistischen Kritik", *The Activist Critic, op.cit.*, p. 279.

83 Sven Møller Kristensen, *Georg Brandes, kritikeren, liberalisten, aktivisten* (Georg Brandes. Critic, Liberal, Activist), Copenhagen 1980, p. 15.

84 John Chr. Jørgensen, *Den sande kunst. Studier i dansk 1800-tals realisme* (True Art. Studies in 19th Century Danish Realism), p. 333.

85 The book is in Lukács' private library. It has Russian stamps and price marks in it.

86 In a bank box in Heidelberg, a suitcase was discovered by chance, full of personal documents belonging to a certain Georg von Lukacs. An alert bank official was able to identify the owner of the box on the basis of a German monograph, written by Fritz Raddatz. This interesting discovery received a great deal of attention in the press.

87 See Lukács György, *A skandináv irodalom szerepe fejlődésemben.* Here we read the following things: "With Ibsen, Scandinavian literature became an important force in my life, precisely because it does not stop with the influence of Ibsen ... I soon made new discoveries: Strindberg's *The Father* and *Miss Julie* (with preface) and J.P. Jacobsen's *Niels Lyhne* ... I suppose I ought to mention that during my student years I also read, for example, Herman Bang, Arne Garborg and Knut Hamsun ... It was only at a later point, after I had made my first literary attempts, that Tolstoy and, above all, Dostoyevsky began to compete with the Scandinavian influences of my youth, that I became acquainted with the works of Henrik Pontoppidan. But he has maintained his central position of importance to me."

"My relationship with Scandinavian literature is also reflected in my first literary apprentice pieces. When still a student, I helped to found a free theatre (The Thalia Society), the object of which was to popularise Scandinavian literature. We included *A Doll's House*, *The Master Builder*, *The Wild Duck* (the last one in my translation) and Strindberg's *The Father* in our repertoire. At almost the same time, I began to publish my first articles in various periodicals, including an article on Herman Bang, and when Ibsen died I published a major study of his work. Some years later, my book *The Development of Modern Drama* was awarded the Kisfaludy Society's prize. Two long chapters were devoted to Ibsen's work, but Strindberg's early naturalism and his later dramatic works are discussed in

some detail, too. Scandinavian literature also played an important part in my first published works. For example, the essay collection *Aesthetic Culture* contains a study of Strindberg on the occasion of his sixtieth birthday as well as comments on Pontoppidan's short stories. In my second essay collection, *The Soul and the Forms*, I wrote an article on Kierkegaard and Regine Olsen."

Zehn Jahre sind vergangen, seit ich zuletzt in Ungarn war, und Sie erinnern sich noch meiner.
Georg Brandes to Vilmos Huszár

And the truth is that what we have experienced in the last four years has been an explosion of hidden forces in humanity, the power and extent of which no one who believes in progress had thought possible.
Georg Brandes

CHAPTER 7

HOW GEORG BRANDES WAS RECEIVED IN HUNGARY AFTER 1907

Friends and Foes

The visit in 1907 ended all thoughts of further trips to Hungary for Georg Brandes. He expressed no wish to return to Budapest, and we can see from letters he received after his last visit to the Hungarian capital that his Hungarian friends did not mention the possibility of future lecture tours either. Whether this can be attributed to political opposition on the part of the Hungarian authorities or whether it was simply that Brandes' increasingly fragile health deterred him from making any unnecessary journeys can only be a matter for speculation. On several occasions, though, he came close to Hungary: until 1910, he continued to pay an annual health visit to the spa town of Karlsbad, where he enjoyed the company of Clémenceau, and in 1912 he went on a lecture tour to Düsseldorf and Vienna, but the outbreak of the First World War put an end to the wanderings of the 'travelling literary critic'. During this period a visit to Hungary would have been quite out of the question. All trips abroad were cancelled. Travelling was difficult in war-torn Europe.

The assassination of the heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary sparked off a tragic chapter of European history: "An unprecedented explosion of brutality, lies, mutual envy and slander, and unbounded hypocrisy that, since its outbreak, has swept through all civilized nations and through many half-civilized or uncivilized ones, too...",[1] to quote Brandes' own views on the brutalities of the war. Hungary allied itself with the Central Powers in order

to preserve its territorial integrity, but this decision proved to be a costly one. Many lives were lost and throughout the country people suffered from food shortages and despair. The early war fever did not last long. The scenes of banner-waving recruits at the centre of enthusiastic, colourful farewells at railway stations became less and less vibrant day by day. Soldiers returned home from the front, ashen-faced, emaciated and crippled. The country's writers and poets dissociated themselves from the war at a very early stage. Led by Mihály Babits and Endre Ady, Hungary's leading poets, they raised their voices in unanimous condemnation of the meaningless slaughter that was taking place.

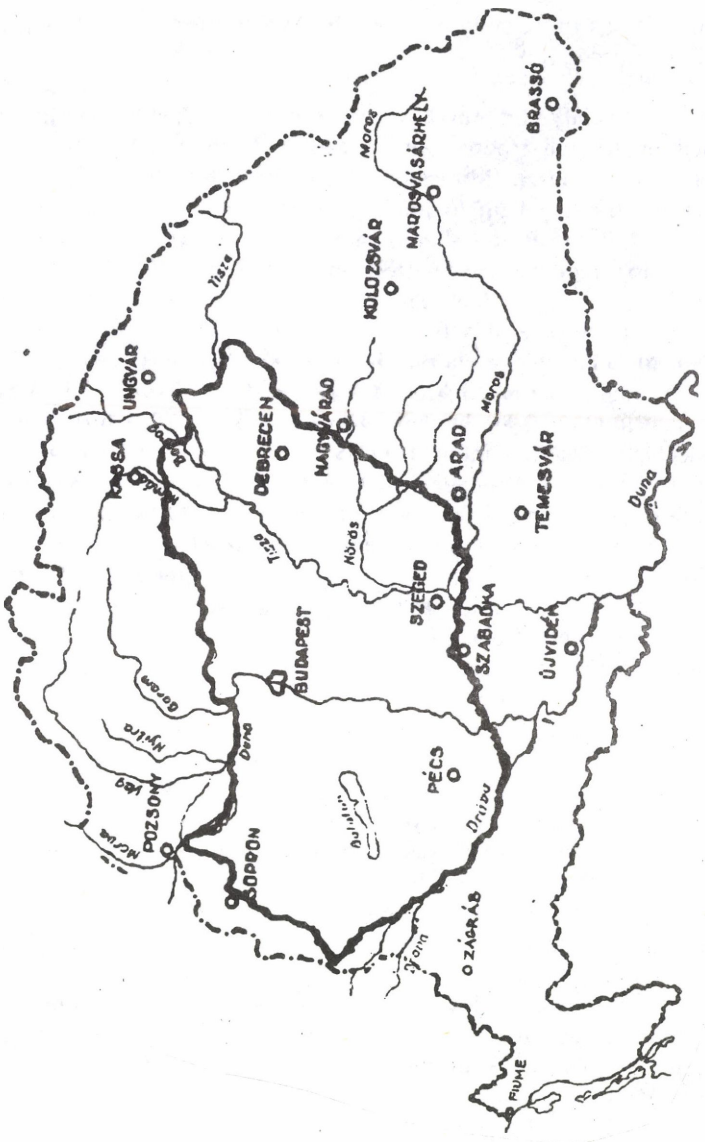
Two of Hungary's leading poets, Mihály Babits and Endre Ady. Both were pacifists in the best sense of the word.

The four long years of the war were to have disastrous consequences for Hungary. In the autumn of 1914, a slow but steady decline set in and no-one at the time could have predicted quite how badly it was all going to end.

Pacifist literature from abroad quickly attracted many readers. Barbusse, Romain Rolland and the novels of Andreas Latzko[2] were especially popular. The media made sure that the Hungarians were left in no doubt about the consistent anti-war stance adopted by Georg Brandes. His neutrality towards both sides provoked powerful, emotional onslaughts from all the belligerent parties. In open letters, he was attacked from the left and the right. "Adieu Brandes,"[3] wrote Clémenceau and these valedictory words marked the end of their long friendship, since he could no longer maintain ties with a friend who refused to issue a public condemnation of Germany, the enemy of France. And in an article, "Colour Blind Neutrality",[4] Brandes was criticized in the British press by William Archer, the translator of Ibsen.

But Brandes' Hungarian friends admired his courage when, in 1916, he appealed to the warring nations to stop the "madness". For they themselves were out-and-out pacifists. The German translations of *Tragediens anden Del* (Second Act of the Tragedy), the articles Brandes had written on the occasion of the Armistice, were published in 1920. The Hungarians could now read it for themselves.

After 1918 events gathered momentum. Changes in the political profile of the country took place in rapid succession. Everyone knew that the war had been lost. The acting Prime Minister, Wekerle, was willing to accept President Wilson's peace plan, although it was disadvantageous to Hungary. On 15 October, Emperor Charles IV, who succeeded Franz-Joseph to the throne of the Dual Monarchy, announced Austria's transition to a federal state. "The Austrian Empire is now but a thing of the past,"[5] sighed Brandes. The opposition, headed by Count Mihály Károlyi, advocated an immediate break with Austria and wished to sign a separate peace treaty with the Allied Powers. But it was too late. István Tisza, who had tried to negotiate peace some years earlier, was well aware of this.[6] Wekerle realized that the situation was hopeless and resigned his post as leader of the Government on 23 October. On the same day, a National Council was formed on the lines of the Czech and Yugoslav model. On 31 October the National Council took over the running of the country with Mihály Károlyi as Prime Minister. This was the bloodless 'aster revolution'.[7] The King accepted Károlyi and the same afternoon, that gifted political figure, István Tisza, became the victim of a senseless political murder. On 16 November, the Republic was proclaimed, which marked the end of the Dual-Monarchy: Hungary was no longer a kingdom. "Austria-Hungary ... that laboriously



The shrunken Hungary. After the First World War Hungary lost more than half of its territory. The dot-and-dash line shows Hungary's borders before the war; the heavy, continuous line shows the new boundaries.

upheld unit has irreparably exploded into small pieces," as Brandes noted on 13 December 1918.[8]

Károlyi certainly did not have an easy time. The border areas were occupied by foreign troops, who advanced further and further into the interior. Oszkár Jászi, Minister for Minority Interests in the Károlyi government, tried in vain to implement his idea of creating an "Eastern Switzerland". But in Brandes' opinion, too, "the opportunity to turn Austria-Hungary into a monarchical Switzerland was not seized."[9] The Allied forces had already advanced a long way into Hungary, and their position marked what were to become the future boundaries. When the demand for a reduction in Hungary's territory, including Transylvania, was presented to the government, Károlyi resigned. On 19 March 1919, a Communist government took over, led by the Marxist Béla Kun. The Hungarian Soviet Republic lasted for four months, during which time the first unsuccessful attempt was made to introduce socialism on the Soviet Russian model. The agricultural policy ended in complete disaster and the country, already plagued by food shortages and inflation, had to acknowledge that things could after all become much worse. There was strong internal as well as external opposition to the new Republic: Romanian troops invaded Budapest and at the end of July, Béla Kun and his government had to flee the country. Most of the radical intelligentsia, too, hurried into temporary exile, primarily in Vienna.

On 24 November, a new government was formed, led by the Christian Democrat, Károly Huszár. Two days later, the Romanians had left the country and at the head of the national army, Admiral Miklós Horthy entered Budapest, "the guilty city".[10]

The Armistice settlement was entirely in the hands of the victors. The papers were signed on 4 June 1920. The Hungarians had to accept the most humiliating settlement in its thousand year history: 71% of its entire territory and 61% of its population were handed over to the newly-created European republics: Czechoslovakia, Romania and Yugoslavia.[11]

On 1 March 1920, Miklós Horthy was elected Regent. The consolidation of 'the kingdom without a king' began. Ruthless persecution of sympathisers of the republic followed. With the clear-sightedness of a Cassandra, Brandes wrote in 1918:

> How lasting the peace that must soon be signed will be will largely depend on the degree of magnanimity shown by the various powers. We must hope for the best, without forgetting how rarely

> magnanimity occurs. If it was not displayed by the conquered, it is hardly likely to be displayed by the conquerors. Up to now, the world has seen more unfairness and cruelty, more hatred and thirst for revenge than actual magnanimity.[12]

The future did not seem too bright for the amputated Hungary. It is understandable that the letters that were sent to Brandes in Copenhagen during this period of upheaval were full of despair. For the correspondence continued, despite war and political changes. His home was a veritable information bureau during the war years. The almost eighty-year-old Brandes received some fifty letters a day from far and near, and new articles and commentaries were sent out daily, together with replies to the many letters. The Hungarians sought his advice and support on many different matters. The requests often came from ordinary people who hoped that with his valuable connections he would be able to intervene in some of the difficult and often slow-moving cases involving the release of prisoners-of-war. Professor Huszár's good friend and colleague, József Ferneczy, wrote despairingly to Brandes asking for help in finding his interned son, who might possibly be in a Danish camp. In spite of his huge burden of work, Brandes looked into the matter.

Both during and after the war, the Hungarian intelligentsia kept in touch with their Danish friend, and although several of these radical writers were in exile abroad, they did not forget to supply Brandes with information about conditions in Central Europe. Like many others throughout Europe, Vilmos Huszár wrote to Brandes and implored him to write an anti-war article for his periodical, *Revue de Hongrie*.[13] He knew, along with all other intellectuals in Europe, that Brandes was one of the few who could be relied on to keep a cool head and defend the humanist tradition in the face of anti-humanistic madness. Vilmos Huszár wrote from Vienna:

> Es freut mich, dass Sie die Revue de Hongrie lesen; besonders angenehm wäre es, wenn Sie die Güte hätten, für uns einen Artikel über Krieg und Frieden, etc. schreiben wollten; das Honorar könnten Sie selbst feststellen; wir bezahlen jeden Preis. Die Zeitschrift wird im neutralen und auch in Feindeslands gelesen: ist der Zensur nicht unterworfen bei uns; Sie können schreiben, was Ihnen beliebt...[14]

In reply, Brandes asked his Hungarian friend a polemical question: he would be interested to hear Huszár's thoughts on the future of Europe. It was

not easy to make predictions about the future in 1917. But Huszár contrived to use Brandes' own words, spoken ten years earlier on his visit to Budapest in 1907:

> Das Schiff fährt auf dem Meere ... wir wollen stehen bleiben und fordern den Kapitän auf, den Anker hinabzuwerfen ... der Anker wird geworfen und sinkt zehn ... hundert, tausend Meter hinab in das tiefe Meer ... Mein Herr, wir können nicht stehen bleiben ... es ist bodenlos! - sagt der Capitän ... Wo sind wir denn? fragte ich. - Wir sind auf dem Meere der Dummheit ... Und es gibt noch ein solches Meer, das Meer der Bosheit..."[15]

To which Huszár added:

> Die Dummheit und Bosheit sind bodenlos und ewig; die triumphieren im Weltkrieg und werden auch künftig triumphieren.[16]

In widely differing contexts, Brandes was asked to contribute articles and to lend his support to one organisation after another. In October 1922, an international free trade conference was held in Budapest, organised by the English Cobden League.[17] The purpose of the conference was to persuade an international forum of the importance of free trade to Central and Eastern Europe. The new customs regulations constituted an economic danger to Hungary. For that reason, free trade was seen as "essential to the survival of balkanised Eastern Europe".[18] After the Peace Treaty and the division of Austria-Hungary, no new customs or monetary union had been created. The Cobden League regarded it as its most important task to break down "chauvinistic prejudice and customs barriers", and it was convinced that "the wide dissemination of thoughts on the importance of free trade would contribute to peace in Europe".[19]

Brandes was strongly in favour of world-wide free trade, which he saw as an economic precondition for political and personal freedom.[20] The leaders of the conference must have known Brandes' views on this question.

On one point, however, Brandes did not quite live up to the expectations of the Hungarians. This was in the lack of sympathy he showed for the country's tragic amputation resulting from the Peace Treaty. He was actually quite elated that "within the great powers, large and small national minorities have asserted their right to an independent existence".[21] He certainly did not disguise his approval of the newly-created republics of

The powerful fists of the worker push the coffin lid down on the Austro-Hungarian two-faced eagle. This drawing appears as the cover illustration of a work by Karl Kraus, "Farewell Song", which is a requiem to the Austro-Hungarian monarchy.

Europe:

> [They] will change the physiognomy of Europe, smooth out some of its facial features, free these features from lines and wrinkles, eliminate traces of ugliness and hopelessness and generally let the various peoples know greater cheerfulness and self-confidence, in that they will experience what they had previously not even dared to hope for.[22]

Lajos Hatvany, who continued to correspond with Brandes from exile, did not attack the critic directly, but he expressed his disappointment at Brandes' neutral stance and apparent indifference to the position of Hungary in post-war Europe. Hatvany felt duty-bound to send Brandes his new book on Hungary, *Das verwundete Land* (1921), in order to - in his own words - "ein Wort über Ungarn zu sprechen".[23] Furthermore, he explained to Brandes that he would follow in his footsteps and try to become a kind of mediator of Hungarian literature. Previously Brandes had spread knowledge of a number of Scandinavian writers and poets to readers of German via his Scandinavian essays,[24] and now Hatvany would attempt in *his* book to introduce Petőfi and Hungary's new national poet, the controversial modernist Endre Ady.

But not all the letters were concerned with literature and politics. In 1917, Polyxena Pulszky, the daughter of Ferenc Pulszky, one of the leaders of the 1848 Revolution, came to Copenhagen. Since she was in Denmark (incidentally in an official capacity as she was studying the Danish education system), she did not of course want to miss the opportunity of meeting the famous Brandes. The critic politely turned down her request:

> Die Tochter eines so berühmten Mannes wird verstehen, wie ich in Anspruch genommen werde. Vor Ihrem Brief kamen schon in dieser Woche 240 Briefe an.[25]

Brandes was constantly complaining about all the letters that arrived each day and about the time that had to be spent on them, but these complaints might have been nothing more than a strategy for keeping timorous souls at arms length. Mrs Pulszky did receive an invitation in the end and Brandes spent a whole evening with her, exchanging views on Napoleon, Mazzini and Garibaldi.[26]

In addition to all the famous and not so famous people who came to Copenhagen because of the war and who "wanted to while away an hour or two visiting [Brandes]",[27] there were also unions, newspapers and

periodicals to interfere with the working rhythm of this prolific writer. In 1924, Brandes received a circular from the Hungarian newspaper, *Esti Kurir* (The Evening Courier). As "one of the twenty most brilliant minds in the history of mankind",[28] he was asked the following question:

> In Anbetracht des Umstandes, dass zufolge des furchtbaren Weltkrieges die Gefühle der menschlichen Solidarität allmählich abnehmen und das mit schwerer Not und Mühe aufgebaute Friedenswerk seinen sicheren Ruin entgegengeht: was ist nach ihrer Meinung die nächste Lösung dieses Problems, welchen wäre das kräftigste Mittel um die Menschheit ihrer ursprünglichen Bestimmung, dem Werke der Kultur und Gesittung zurückführen?[29]

It was a difficult question that the Hungarians were posing to Brandes, among others. In those dark days, in the midst of despondancy and privation, the Hungarians remembered their old source of inspiration. Hedda Lenkei seized her pen and wrote a far from cheerful birthday letter to the 80-year-old master:

> Heute lese ich in einer Zeitung, dass Sie am 4. Februar Ihren 80 Geburtstag feierten. Wir sind so entfernt von Europa, dass wir dies 10 Tage später erfahren! Erlauben Sie mir, dass ich in Gedanken auch eine Blume zu Ihren Füssen lege mit meinen innigsten Glückwünschen! Ich weiss nicht ob Sie sich meiner erinnern, ich bin unbescheiden und hoffe es! Ich denke mit sehr viel Liebe an dies Paar Stunden welche mir gegönnt waren in Ihrer Gesellschaft zu verbringen. Seither hat sich die Welt hauptsächtlich bei uns verändert, wir sind ja alle so arm geworden. Bücher sind ein Luxusartikel geworden, das ist das allertraurigste.[30]

It was a long time since Brandes' book on *William Shakespeare* had had its moment of triumph in Budapest. In those days, it was on view in every self-respecting salon. Now the desire to buy his books was not so great, although a new one came out every year. However, readers could borrow the latest publications from three different libraries: the University Library, the library of the Hungarian Academy of Science and the Széchényi Library. They had all the great monographs, from *Wolfgang Goethe* (1915), *François de Voltaire* (1916), *Napoleon og Garibaldi* (Napoleon and Garibaldi) (1917), *Caius Julius Caesar* (1918), *Michaelangelo Buonarotti* (1921),

Sagnet om Jesus (The Legend of Jesus) (1925), up to and including *Petrus* (1926).

It is interesting to note that remarkably little was said at the time of Brandes' reception in Hungary, about Brandes' admiration for the 'great individual'. No "exuviation"[31] was detected in his literary criticism. Brandes himself used this expressive metaphor to describe how he had entered a new phase of development after studying Nietzsche's world of ideas. Bertil Nolin calls this change of direction in his writing a "change of paradigm", which was heralded by the lectures on Nietzsche. He thought and wrote in a completely new way, "the positivist jargon of the 1870s was virtually swept aside and he was no longer the cool, logical positivist but rather an 'imaginative novelist'.[32] For it was the 'novelistic' quality of the work that captivated the readers when Brandes wrote about the great cultural figures of Europe. For Brandes, the 'great individual' was a prerequisite for progress and for the advance of culture in general. He was not an admirer of the *Übermensch* in the Nietzschean sense but of the 'intellectual aristocrat' who has contributed something out of the ordinary. Unlike Nietzsche, Brandes was never indifferent to people's sufferings and would never accept any form of intellectual oppression. To the Hungarian intelligentsia, the term "aristocratic radicalism" was mainly interpreted as radicalism in the traditional sense of the word, without much attention being paid to the epithet "aristocratic".[33]

There is probably a special reason why Hungary did not react or did not wish to react to Brandes' 'new paradigm', but continued to focus on those aspects of his authorship that could be traced back to positivism, old-fashioned liberalism and radicalism. These concepts had been of great importance to the Hungarian intellectual middle class, so it is understandable that they would want to preserve the myth of Brandes the radical and single out his radical traits for special attention.

If Brandes' "aristocratic radicalism" failed to establish itself as a concept in the Hungarian reception of Brandes, there were plenty of other labels that managed to sneak in. Many of the views on Brandes that have done the rounds of Europe can be traced back to a common source. There are many overlappings, and even direct transfers from the press of one country to that of another. It is noteworthy that many of these identical expressions are especially prevalent in connection with negative evaluations of Brandes. Certain phrases such as "superficiality and lack of originality, strangeness" seem to have established a firm foothold in the Hungarian press. These expressions and many others were taken directly from foreign reviews, though the time scale of this somewhat deplorable unanimity was staggered. These negative clichés first appeared in Hungary after the turn of the century, and were probably connected with the advance of anti-semitism around 1905.

The anti-semitic caricature of Brandes had already been perfected by 1872. He was described as a charlatan, a superficial man with little real understanding of art and culture, who happened to have been blessed with a phenomenal memory and the ability to express himself clearly. According to Henry J. Gibbons, Brandes provoked this reaction in some of his recipients because he was the quintessence of what anti-semites regarded as a Jew: "...radical, freethinking, cosmopolitan, irreverent, brash, articulate, iconoclastic, arrogant, godless and gleefully impudent."[34]

It soon became clear that coolness or enthusiasm towards Brandes was directly related to the degree of liberalism or conservatism of the medium in question. Brandes' name could be used on both ideological fronts of a war that was waged with pen and ink.

A clear idea of what was going on can be gained by comparing the portraits of Brandes that appeared in the periodicals *Nyugat* and *Magyar kultura.*

The very titles give a clue to the political profiles of these journals. The name *Nyugat* (The West) indicates with admirable clarity that this periodical was interested in modern Western European, intellectual currents and was seeking some kind of dialogue with other cultures. It was open to what was strange, unknown and experimental in art. It became a mouthpiece for modernism, including Hungarian modernism, and the editors made sure that Hungary got its share of what was happening on the cultural front in Europe. But while *Nyugat* thus promoted things European, *Magyar Kultura* (Hungarian Culture) kept a tight grip on things to prevent any disturbing foreign elements from creeping into Hungarian ways of thinking. With unwavering confidence in its 'holy mission' to strengthen national traditions

and promote Hungarian Catholicism, the periodical launched a narcistic form of nationalism. This in turn was quickly followed by two deplorable social cankers, viz. chauvinism and anti-semitism. *Hungarian Culture* was very Hungarian but did not contain much culture.

In 1912, on the occasion of Brandes' seventieth birthday, the populist Dezső Szabó,[35] who worked for *Nyugat*, wrote an evaluation of the life's work of the Danish critic. He summed up his admiration for Brandes in one sentence: "His long life has been a beautiful battle."[36] Brandes had discovered something in literature that had previously been overlooked, Szabó explained. What was it? It was the author's courage and his ability to express an artistic ideal in full, without any kind of compromise. For it is this courage and this ability that enables a poet to express what is on his mind and that makes his work beautiful and personal. Courage is also the essence of Brandes' literary credo. It is necessary to give oneself completely to art, for art is not simply an afternoon hobby, Szabó continues, art is the whole of life. It is this acknowledgement that lies at the heart of Brandes' critical methodology: he applies the same methodology to art that he applies to life.

Brandes does not approach a new, as yet unknown, literary work with pre-determined, abstract ideas. He sees it through the eyes of a scientific researcher and attempts to reveal the connections he discovers and to relate these connections to other phenomena in life. It is obviously the positivist in Brandes that is closest to Dezső Szabó's heart. "When Brandes examines a literary work, he does not allow an 'aesthetic filter' to slide down between him and the work," the author of the article explains and goes on to say: "If I had to apply Zola's famous statement, 'Une oeuvre d'art est un coin de la création vu à travers un tempérament', to Brandes, I would probably reformulate it as, 'Une oeuvre de *critique* est une chose d'art vue à travers un tempérament'."[37] When Brandes makes a pronouncement or passes judgement on something, we do not meet one particular aspect of Brandes, he does not put on the toga of the literary critic. No! Dezső Szabó emphasizes that it is Brandes the whole person who is speaking; he cannot be compartmentalised: here we have the great fighter, here is the critic and here we have the connaisseur. That is why Brandes' writings have a special lyricism of their own and a hypnotic power. They have a personal colour and a personal voice. His lack of objectivity is balanced by the strength of his subjective conviction.

"However much opinions might change in the future, Brandes life's work will remain a courageous voice in the 19th century battle of ideas,"[38] the author of the article concludes.

Ten years later, in 1922, in connection with Brandes' eightieth birthday, *Nyugat* published another retrospective study of the critic. This article, almost six pages long, surveys Brandes' work and evaluates his influence on European culture. The author focuses especially on Brandes' role as a catalyst and on his work as a mediator. To Géza Feleky, he was "the messenger of the unknown".[39] He discovered new talents and made sure that they became known throughout Europe. It was through the agency of Brandes that such figures as J.P. Jacobsen, Søren Kierkegaard, August Strindberg and Henrik Pontoppidan became part of European consciousness, and it was also through him that "two of the loneliest geniuses of the century, Nietzsche and Strindberg, discovered each other".

However, Feleky continues, by juxtaposing Brandes' individual observations, we can see that "Brandes' eyes penetrate deeper than his pen".[40] His books should be seen together, as a unit. "Individually, they can seem rather irritating" with their informal serial-like style. But then the author goes on to praise him again. He admires Brandes' sensitivity to what was in the air: "Very few were as knowledgeable as Brandes or wrote as well as he about literary and aesthetic questions at the end of the century." He had a talent for detecting new currents in literature, which he immediately transposed into a form that enabled a wider public to understand and appreciate them.[41]

Brandes was the pupil of Taine, Feleky informs us, but he broke with Taine's rigid, scientific approach. He also had an admirable ability to relate "intimate details" about the writers, and it was precisely because of these "infinitely minute" observations that he was also read by non-specialists.

Feleky stresses Brandes' 'dual' role: his role in the general intellectual life of Europe and his role as a literary leader in the intellectual life of Denmark and Scandinavia. The author of the article regards the latter role as the more important one. The article maintains that Brandes communicated in both directions, which is hardly an original observation. But could one possibly say anything more significant about the eighty-year-old critic than that he fertilized Scandinavian literature with all that he had learnt in Western Europe and that he then carried the fruits - the fresh, tender Scandinavian literature - back to the heart of Europe?

According to Feleky, we ought not to look for absolute values in Brandes, but should regard his work as having achieved the ultimate that any critic could hope for, i.e. a living dialogue with the writers and readers. Nobody in the last fifty years has been able to do this with even remotely the same degree of success as Brandes.[42]

Both of these articles from *Nyugat* communicate the same clear message.

Both depict Brandes as the "good European and cultural missionary", who was a courageous voice in the 19th century battle of ideas.

Soon after Brandes' death, an article with the provocative title "The Hero of Plagiarism" appeared in *Magyar Kultura*. This article, which was not even signed, could hardly be regarded as an obituary for the newly deceased critic. After reading a study of Brandes' literary criticism by J. Overmans in the German periodical *Stimmen der Zeit* from June 1927, *Magyar Kultura* felt obliged to join in the fray. The humble author, who only gives his initials, C.S., adopts a surprisingly aggressive tone. He has conscientiously collected all the clichés familiar to readers of the conservative press all over the world. Brandes is not original, he is a plagiarist Jack-of-all-trades, who time and again has been shown to have lifted page after page of other people's work, without disclosing his sources. In order to add weight to his accusations, the anonymous journalist refers us to Julian Schmidt and his *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur*, to some articles in *Revue des deux mondes* and *Saturday Review* and to the philological expertise of the Polish scholar, Zdziechowski, and the Swedish literary historian, Henrik Schück. With all these authorities unanimous in regarding Brandes as someone whose work was not to be taken seriously, there must be some explanation as to why the whole of Europe lay at his feet. The reader is left in no doubt. The author of the article reveals that it was "the godless European Jews who turned Brandes into a celebrity".[43] For his own services to literature would never have entitled him to such acclaim. It was the Jews in Berlin and other European cities who smoothed his path. It was Jewish newspapers that blazened his name abroad. Apart from free thought, free love was his biggest contribution, the zealous reviewer hastens to tell his readers. A diligent copier, a feeble plagiarist, who has not brought a single, original idea to literature, has undeservedly captured the attention of the world. The world has once more been led astray, he sighs. Jewish global solidarity is not only to be found in banking and commerce, there is also a Jewish monopoly observable in the world of culture and intellectual life.[44] The article is distasteful because of its strong, anti-semitic bias, but it shows that Brandes could also be written about in this way in Hungary.

A whole spate of articles were published in the wake of the sad announcement of Brandes' death. Aurél Kárpáti (1884-1963), one of the critics attached to *A Hét*, remembered Brandes' "searching eyes and penetrating gaze",[45] which were constantly fixed on current literary, political and social developments, in Denmark as well as in the rest of Europe. But Denmark, with its "dried fish, newly churned butter and petty-bourgeois morality"[46] was too claustrophobic for Brandes. This persecuted

"eternal Jew" had been driven out of the country. But now that he was dead, the whole of Denmark was in mourning before his catafalque, bewailing its loss.

Another image also emerges, at least as cliché-ridden as the previous one, namely that of Brandes the campaigning revolutionary. Kárpáti relates how Brandes took up the cudgels on behalf of Maupassant, Zola, Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy, Ibsen, Strindberg, Kierkegaard, J.P. Jacobsen, Drachmann, Anatole France and many others. The author concludes by giving a detailed account of Brandes' life. If there were still any Hungarians who were unacquainted with every particular of the lectures at the University of Copenhagen in 1871, now was their chance to read about them.

Like others before him, Aurél Kápáti tried to draw parallels between Danish and Hungarian conditions. He found a Hungarian equivalent of Brandes in the person of the great reformer, Ferenc Kazinczy (1759-1831). Like Brandes, he thought that a country's isolation from the main European cultural developments could only lead to perdition for the country in question. In Kazinczy's opinion, Hungary needed linguistic and literary renewal. He was the spiritual leader of the 'neologists', a worthy predecessor for Brandes.

The rhetorical climax of the article lies in its picturesque description of the modern breakthrough: "Beneath the fallen leaves of Romanticism, firm shoots began to sprout - the national genius was resurrected, wrapped in the mantle of realistic literature."[47] The obstetrician was Brandes, who broke away from the academic traditions. His critical work should therefore be judged more for its incisive sharpness and its elegant linguistic niceties than for its depth. But, Kárpáti explains, his message reached every corner of the world via Germany "the telephone switchboard of Europe".[48] Kárpáti finds it an impressive perspective that two generations have grown up with his books and that his works are still an important part of a general European culture. Kárpáti's article contains many modern points of view while retaining myths, clichés and idioms that have been inherited from previous evaluations of Brandes. But old myths die hard.

Brandes' Works in Hungarian Translation

The history of Georg Brandes' reception in Hungary follows the same general pattern as in the other European countries, but with one notable difference, viz. the fact that Hungarian readers gained access to the works of Brandes in their own language at a surprisingly late date. The first Hungarian version of a major work by Brandes was not available until 1910!

Considering the fact that *Emigrant Literature* was reviewed almost as soon as it was published in Germany and that on that occasion passages were extensively quoted in Hungarian, the publication of the first full-length translation appeared remarkably late, coming as it did almost 37 years after this early presentation of Brandes.

One test of an author's success is how many of his works are published, bought and read. If an author catches on, his books spark off a desire in the public to buy them in order, as it were, to be part of that success. The public wants to know the work that is 'being discussed' in the newspapers and periodicals. The great success of Brandes' major work, *Main Currents in 19th Century Literature*, cannot be demonstrated more clearly than by reference to the large number of translations, even into 'exotic' languages, far away from the Copenhagen-Berlin 'axis'. *Emigrant Literature*, published in 1872, was translated into German the same year, into Polish and Russian in 1881, into Finnish in 1887 and into English in 1901. This order of translation was the same for all six volumes.[49] Apart from the German translations, which generally followed hard on the heels of the Danish originals, several years usually elapsed before translations appeared in other European languages. But it would be quite erroneous to infer from this that the later the appearance of a translated version, the less the interest of the country in question. It would be more reasonable to conclude that if a work still provoked so much interest that it was considered worth translating several years after its first appearance, it must be a hit, a success.

It was the German translations in particular that provided the basis for the dissemination of Brandes' work throughout Europe. The German versions served as a medium in a number of countries: they were often used as the starting-point for translation into other languages. A few enthusiastic Polish and Russian translators, with some knowledge of Danish were keen to go *ad fontes*, but as a rule the work was carried out via the German translations. These were especially important in the history of Brandes' reception, since they represented a possible 'point of access' to Brandes for those who could neither read Danish nor, as yet, read the works in their own language.

The desire to publish Brandes in their own respective languages arose relatively early in the Slavonic countries. The first translations appeared in 1881, four years before his first visit to Poland and six years before he visited Russia. The situation in Hungary was rather different. The most plausible explanation for the continued use of German translations must be that Hungary, as part of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, was situated closer to Germany and to Europe generally, and that potential readers of Brandes could all read German. There seemed to be nothing unnatural or exceptional

about reading Brandes in German. Many other foreign writers were read in German, since the Germans were diligent translators of foreign literature into their own language.

What was unusual was that the Hungarian periodicals regularly featured up-to-date reviews of Brandes' publications, without the public being able to read the works in their native language. The bookshops sold the German translations, of course, and the German versions were usually acquired by the larger libraries.[50]

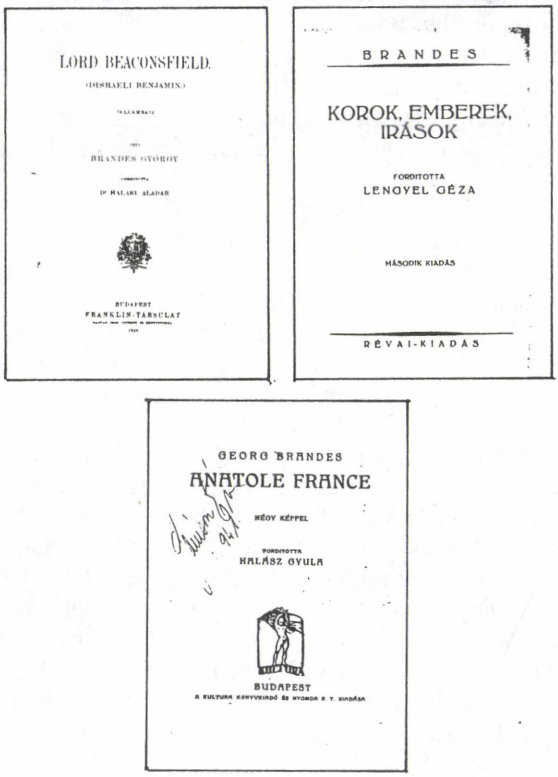
As a matter of course, Hungarian readers seized on these books while missing no opportunity to protest at the hegemony of the German language; a well-meaning but empty display of Hungarian patriotism at the time of the Dual Monarchy. On the one hand, they enjoyed the advantages that came with the Dual Monarchy, including the certainty of being able to find the same new books in the book shops, whether they happened to be in Budapest, Prague, Pozsony (Bratislava), Kolozsvár or Vienna. On the other hand, they asked Brandes to give his lecture in French, since German was thought to be politically too discredited.

But one cannot completely ignore the fact that being able to present an author in the mother tongue adds an important dimension to the reception of the author in question by the public. When a writer gains acceptance in a foreign country, the reception proceeds in clearly definable stages. The reception begins with an introductory phase during which the author is discussed and quoted, and this is then followed by the translations. It is usually this direct meeting without language barriers which further catalyses the interest of the public. The unusual thing about the course of Brandes' reception in Hungary is that strong interest in his works and person was aroused, without the existence of a single book of his in Hungarian!

Finally, in 1910, the translation of *Lord Beaconsfield. Benjamin Disraeli* was published. One might well ask, in surprise, why this particular work should have been selected? Why should this book have the honour of being the first of Brandes' works to be translated into Hungarian? Was it just coincidence? If one looks at the works by Brandes that have been translated into different languages, one cannot help thinking that the choice must sometimes have been quite random. It is a very mixed bag that has been translated into Finnish, Romanian or Italian over the years. But it can hardly have been pure chance that led to the selection of the monograph on Disraeli for translation. One suspects that there was a deeper reason for the translation of this particular work.

After the turn of the century, the anti-semitic undercurrents began to

surface. The powerful, assimilated Jewish middle class was a thorn in the flesh of the impoverished gentry and the petty bourgeoisie. The old saying that the Jew is a guest in a Christian country had long since been rendered meaningless by the massive strides made in all important areas of society by converts and by those who had been assimilated.[51] Around the year 1910, 42% of all journalists in Budapest were of Jewish origin, and furthermore, 70% of all large estates were leased by Jewish magnates, which would previously have been unthinkable. It is perhaps not surprising that anti-Semitism was particularly strong in Budapest if one looks at the growth in numbers of Jewish inhabitants in the capital. In 1910, the Jewish community accounted for some 20% of the population as a whole and 40% of the potential electorate. Many of Brandes' acquaintances were Jewish, half-



Works of Georg Brandes in Hungarian translation.

Jewish or converts: they included the politician Miksa Falk, the Empress Elizabeth's spirited conversation companion; the publisher József Diner-Dénes; the editor of *Pesti Napló*, József Vészi; the literary critic Vilmos Huszár, the writer Sándor Bródy; the critic and patron of the arts, Lajos Hatvany; and the historian Henrik Marczali, to name but a few. Most of those connected with the liberal Sunday Circle, the Sociological Society, the Hungarian Fauvists and the Galilei Circle had a Jewish background. Jewishness and broad-mindedness soon came to be thought of as indistinguishable from one another. This connection became firmly established in the official consciousness and in the years that followed, broad-mindedness was not regarded as something to be commended. Budapest, this 'infested city', had made itself unworthy of being chosen as the seat of the primate of the Catholic Church.[52] To the writer Dezső Szabó, it had become a new Sodom.

Brandes' biography of Disraeli was thus going to be used to try and assuage the fears of the worried Magyars. For England flourished under Lord Beaconsfield! The book was simultaneously an attack on the growing anti-Semitism. This was also Brandes' original intention. He could not have polemicized half as effectively in his own name as he could using his fascinating hero as his mouthpiece.

To the assimilated Jewish middle class that was inclined to forget its origins and to flirt with the gentry, Disraeli's life was an allegory. Benjamin Disraeli was proud of his descent from one of the oldest races in the world, but at the same time he succeeded in breaching the confines of his background and gaining a well-deserved place in the aristocratic upper class of gentile society. He personified the idea of the book: the Jew as aristocrat. And his qualifications were credible.[53]

The entire monograph revolves around the concept of the 'Jewish mind', around Jewish background and assimilation. It was a subject that was well tuned to the atmosphere in Hungary. The "spirited, unreserved Jewishness"[54] of the book was felt to be affirmative in the crisis of identity in which the assimilated Jews found themselves. Brandes' presentation of the modern, non-orthodox Jew, with his post-Judaic view of existence, was as relevant a contribution to the Jewish question in Hungary as it was in Scandinavia.

> His [Disraeli's] like will never again be born ... But when I consider how, since his example, only two possibilities remain open to the Jews, to continue to live and breathe within the boundaries of semitism or free, perhaps even prominent participation in the

> secular, intellectual life of Europe, Disraeli seems to me to be not only a wonderful representative of Judaism but the words the Last Jew spring to my lips when I think of him.[55]

This was extremely pertinent to the Jewish intelligentsia's own situation. It was a case of choosing the secular, intellectual life of Europe.

But there was another aspect of the book, too, that could be interpreted as having direct relevance to Hungary. Lord Beaconsfield's main political idea was the consolidation of British sovereignty. This was in consonance with the current situation in Hungary. The Dual Monarchy was one of the most heterogenous countries of Europe, as far as its population was concerned, and the various national minority groups were still oppressed. Efforts to preserve the sovereignty of the Hungarian race over these minority groups, which together made up more than half the population of Hungary, received some kind of legitimacy via Disraeli's imperialistic views.

The book was translated by a young historian, Aladár Halasy (1883-1969).[56] He dedicated the translation to one of Hungary's most controversial politicians, Count István Tisza (1861-1919). The translator had noted certain character traits common to these two powerful, influential statesmen: both were controversial figures in the political history of their times. As a politician Tisza moved within the confines of a tradition-bound, conservative ethos, but he nevertheless strongly supported bourgeois liberalism and showed a lively interest in the new bourgeoisie. He was energetic, purposeful, rather ruthless and on several occasions he displayed great qualities of leadership. Like Lord Beaconsfield, he was an arch-conservative but he was not a preserver.

Having been issued with this unusual dedication, the book was reviewed in a popular scientific journal, *Uránia*.[57] Sándor Pethő,[58] an industrious journalist with conservative sympathies, was given the task of writing about Brandes' work. Unfortunately, his review is not much more than a detailed summary.

He stresses Disraeli's political consistency and his ability to look at political goals in a practical, utilitarian way, and he expresses his admiration for Disraeli's success and stamina. Like Brandes, he also emphasizes that Disraeli's conversion had more to do with orthodoxy than with race.[59] Pethő points out that there have been many statesmen throughout history who were writers, but neither Julius Caesar, Frederick the Great nor (to mention a Hungarian example) Miklós Zrinyi[60] managed to reconcile his own personality with his subject matter in the same, convincing way that Lord Beaconsfield succeeded in doing. He himself embodies the qualities of his

Révai Testvérek Irodalmi Intézet Részvénytársaság -

T.

Révai Testvérek Irodalmi Intézet Részvénytársaságnak,

Budapest.

Ezennel elvállalom a t. Társasá- abbeli megbizását, hogy

Brandes: Menschen und Werke

" : Gestalten und Gedanken

című müveiből a megjelölt részeket lefordítsam, ugy hogy legfeljebb 20 ivnyi terjedelme legyen.-

Tiszteletdijul fizet nekem a t. Társaság a kiadásában megjelenő "Világkönyvtár" alakjában és betüivel nyomtatott ivért 30.- azaz Harminc koronát, mely összeg a mü imprimálásakor esedékes.-

A teljes sajtókész kéziratot 1913.augusztus 1-ig tartozom a t. Társaságnak átadni.-

A forditás a t. Társaság kizárólagos és korlátlan tulajdonát képezi.-

A reviziókat én tartozom elvégezni.-

Budapest, 1913. május 7.

Tisztelettel

Lengyel Géza

Contract between the publishing firm Révai and the translator Géza Lengyel. The essay collection Korok, emberek, írások *(Epochs, People, Writings) is a selection of Brandes' essays from two separate volumes:* Menschen und Werke *and* Gestalten und Gedanken.

fictitious characters. From among Disraeli's political statements, the reviewer chose to quote the one about the continuing importance of landowners in an age of capitalism. Pethő mentions Disraeli's reference to the fates of Tyre and Venice, "which clearly shows what will happen to great trading powers if they lack firmness and immutability with respect to the territorial principle."[61]

Four years after the book on Disraeli, a new translation was published, entitled *Korok, emeberek, írások* (Epochs, People, Writings). This was based on two essay collections, *Menschen und Werke* (1894) and *Gestalten und Gedanken* (1903). The Hungarian version contains essays about Émile Zola, Guy de Maupassant, Fjodor Dostoyevsky, Leo Tolstoy, Georges Clémenceau and Henrik Ibsen. The translation was the work of a talented literary critic, Géza Lengyel (1881-1967). He was a contributor to the two leading periodicals, *Nyugat* and *Huszadik Század*, so Brandes' texts were in good hands. His selection of essays was well received by the public and ten years later, in 1922, it was reprinted.

The collection had an introduction written by József Pogány,[62] the editor of the *Világkönyvtár* (World Library) series. With appealing rhetoric and a dash of fantasy he writes about Brandes' introductory lectures on 19th century literature:

> Copenhagen follows these lectures with bated breath. The crowds storm the auditorium where this young man is lecturing. People stand for hours, in sleet and snow, to get a place ... Hundreds enthuse and tens of thousands are upset. How dare he speak about Danish literature in that way? How dare this rude novice defile Danish historical traditions? This unpatriotic Jew is attacking the nation's most sacred feelings![63]

Pogány 'cites' public opinion in Denmark and ridicules the persecution to which Brandes was subjected. "Brandes is to Denmark what Robespierre, Saint-Just and Marat were to France, and what Goethe and Schiller were to Germany,"[64] the author claims rather glibly. Brandes' work in petty-bourgeois Denmark can best be compared with that of the uncrowned leader of linguistic renewal in Hungary, Ferenc Kazinczy, who had similarly waged a ceaseless campaign with his mordant pen against the conservatism of the "orthologists". The Hungarian critic singles out three important areas of Brandes' work for particular attention: his role as communicator, including his importance for the intellectual life of Europe, his brave stand as the harbinger of modern intellectual currents to narrow-minded Denmark, and

finally, his constant readiness to attack all kinds of religious or political reactionary movements.

It was the translator's task to select a suitable number of essays for the collection. Even a cursory glance at the titles is enough to give some idea of the principles on which the selection was based. Lengyel chose texts from Brandes' collections that might seem controversial to the readers: Clémenceau was a *persona non grata* in Hungary in 1914, and the works of Zola had caused indignation in conservative circles. But in order to avoid arousing too many strong feelings, he also included the essays on Ibsen, Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky.

The review that appeared in the ultra-Conservative, Catholic periodical *Magyar Kultura* was thus more or less predictable. The reviewer does not think much of the article that introduces the collection. He dismisses it as vapid, "diluted with the familiar freethinker sauce".[65] The tendentious reviewer, who understandably does not see fit to disclose his own name, makes it clear right from the start that he regards Brandes as "one of the most famous generals in the army that is waging an incessant war against Christianity and national traditions".[66] He goes on to attack Brandes' "superficiality" and explains that although Brandes is a literary critic, he is not one of those who goes straight to the sources. Instead, he bases his writings on the results of other researchers. However, the essay on Maupassant is singled out as the most successful. And why? Because in this essay, Brandes explains the secret of Maupassant's success. "It lies in his immoral stories, which are told in a refined language, with no traces of coarseness,"[67] and the reviewer adds maliciously that Maupassant's approach would, of course, have the approval of Brandes, the apostle of free love.[68] On the other hand, he praises Brandes' remarkable psychological observations and notes that Brandes does not handle anyone with kid gloves in these essays. The author concludes: "All in all, an interesting book, and despite its many faults, it is written with unusual talent."[69]

In 1921 the third Hungarian translation was published, a short book about Anatole France. The popularity of the French author in Hungary was probably the reason why it was thought desirable to translate Brandes' work. All the works of France were by then available in Hungarian, and his influence on many contemporary Hungarian writers and poets is obvious.[70] The translation was based on the German monograph published in 1905, in the series *Die Literatur*, which Brandes edited at the time. It was reviewed in *Nyugat* by one of the periodical's leading aesthetes, Aladár Kuncz,[71] who thought that although Brandes' book was not much more than an extended essay, it nevertheless painted a subtle picture of Anatole France, both as a

man and as an artist. Brandes' personal experiences added extra spice to the work. The book was a success and its influence can still be traced in Anatole France's reception in Hungary.

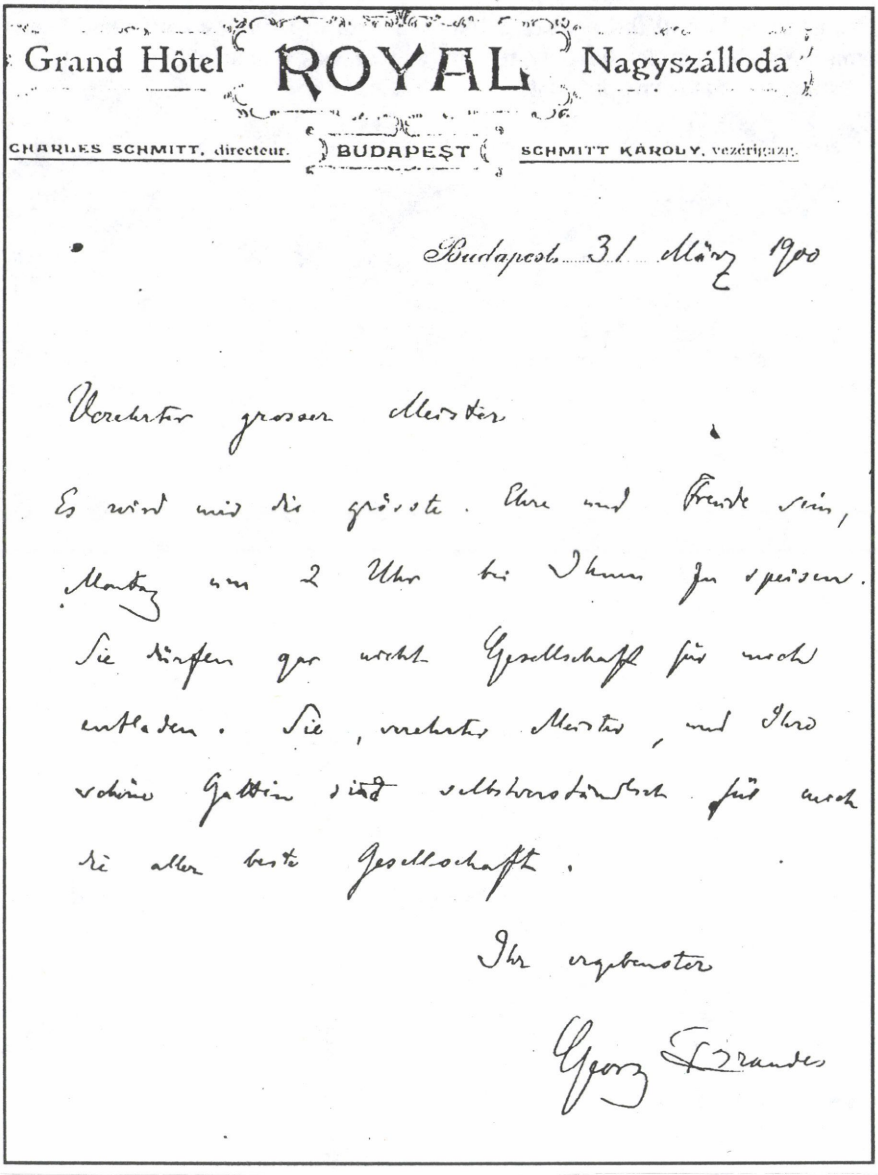
Four years later, in January 1925, *Nyugat* published another essay on Anatole France, shortly after his death. France was still a fashionable writer and *Nyugat* had a reputation as an organ that kept up with current trends. Unexpectedly, Brandes received a letter from one of its contributors, a young translator of Scandinavian literature:

> To the Most Eminent Mr Georg Brandes,
>
> I have read your wonderful article on Anatole France in "Socialdemokraten". On the occasion of this event I would like to ask of you a great favour, to be allowed to translate these articles for the Hungarian journal "Nyugat"? The above-mentioned journal is *still* a cultural organ in Hungary; its editor is Ignotus - and the poems of Endre Ady, our greatest poet, have been published exclusively by us. But the journal is unfortunately very poor; so I must respectfully ask whether we might publish these articles in return for a modest fee - or for no fee at all ... (I await your prompt reply).
>
> I would like to use this opportunity to thank you for your immortal works and to express my fervent wish that you will be able to continue to fight with your previous youthful enthusiasm.
>
> Yours faithfully, Henrik Hajdu[72].[73]

Brandes must indeed have replied promptly, for his letter was sent off just before the end of the year and the article appeared in Hungarian in the first issue of *Nyugat* the following year.

This presentation of the Hungarian translations shows, in the first instance, that the Hungarian public's reception of Georg Brandes was not primarily based on translations of his works. So much is clear. What is of greater interest and importance, in the context of his reception, is that individual works of his did after all appear in Hungarian and that their selection demonstrates knowledge of Brandes' writings. Furthermore, it would appear that the works that were translated had a political or literary-political function. And finally, it should not be forgotten that 37 years had elapsed between his introduction in Hungary and the publication of the first

translation. For all those years, a lively interest in Brandes' works had been maintained. That is the only reason why it was considered profitable to publish them at such a late date.


Grand Hôtel ROYAL Nagyszálloda

CHARLES SCHMITT, directeur. BUDAPEST SCHMITT KÁROLY, vezérigazg.

Budapest 31 März 1900

Verehrter grosser Meister

Es wird mir die grösste Ehre und Freude sein, Montag um 2 Uhr bei Ihnen zu speisen. Sie können gar nicht Gesellschaft für mich entdecken. Sie, verehrter Meister, und Ihre verehrte Gattin sind selbstverständlich für mich die allerbeste Gesellschaft.

Ihr ergebenster

Georg Brandes

Georg Brandes' letter to Mór Jókai. The letter is kept in the Széchenyi Library in Budapest.

Notes to Chapter 7:

1 Georg Brandes, *Tragediens anden Del* (Second Act of the Tragedy), Copenhagen 1919, p. 20.

2 Andreas Latzko (1876-1943), Hungarian writer who lived in Vienna when Brandes got to know him in 1920.

3 *Correspondance, op.cit.*, 4, p. 120.

4 William Archer, *Colour-Blind Neutrality*, London 1916. Brandes wrote four open letters in reply to Archer's accusations. See Doris R. Asmundsson, *op.cit.*, pp. 359ff.

5 Georg Brandes, *Tragediens anden Del, op.cit.*, p. 26.

6 On 25.1. 1917, István Tisza had made a direct approach to the American ambassador in Vienna.

7 31 October - 1 November is All Saints Day, the day when, in Hungary, the graveyards are decorated with asters and chrysanthemums.

8 Georg Brandes, *Tragediens anden Del, op.cit.*, p. 28.

9 *Ibid.*

10 See John Lukács, *Budapest 1900, op.cit.*, p. 212.

11 For Hungary's history during and after the First World War, see *Magyarország története 1890-1918*, 2, ed. Péter Hanák, Budapest 1978; Dominicus Kosáry, *Ungerns historia, op.cit.*, pp. 219ff.

12 Georg Brandes, *Tragediens anden Del, op.cit.*, p. 22.

13 A Hungarian periodical, which was published in Vienna, in German.

14 Vilmos Huszár to Georg Brandes, 24.7. 1917, Brandes Archive.

15 *Ibid.*

16 *Ibid.*

17 A union, founded in 1866, dedicated to the promotion of free trade. Named after Richard Cobden (1804-65), the leading proponent of the British system of free trade.

18 Magyar Cobden-Szövetség to Georg Brandes, 12.7. 1923, Brandes Archive (capsule 158).

19 *Ibid.*

20 Georg Brandes, *Verdenskrigen* (The World War), Copenhagen 1916, p. 331.

21 Georg Brandes, *Tragediens anden Del, op.cit.*, p. 24.

22 *Ibid.*

23 Lajos Hatvany to Georg Brandes, undated, 1921, Brandes Archive.

24 In all probability, Hatvany was referring to Georg Brandes' *Skandinavische Persönlichkeiten*, 1-3, Munich 1902-3.

25 Georg Brandes to Polyxena Pulszky, 27.10. 1917, Fond VIII/2127,

MTA.

26 Polyxena Pulszky to Georg Brandes, 17.10. 1917, Brandes Archive.

27 *Ibid.*

28 Károly Rassay to Georg Brandes, 28.11. 1924, Brandes Archive.

29 *Ibid.*

30 Hedda Lenkei to Georg Brandes, 14.2. 1922, Brandes Archive.

31 Bertil Nolin, "The critic and his paradigm", *The Activist Critic*, *op.cit.*, pp. 33-34.

32 *Ibid.*

33 József Diner-Dénes' account of Brandes is one of the few exceptions where "aristocratic radicalism" is dealt with at some length.

34 Henry J. Gibbons, "Georg Brandes: The Reluctant Jew", *The Activist Critic*, *op.cit.*, p. 65.

35 Dezső Szabó (1879-1945), author, critic, publisher. Controversial figure, bourgeois radical with a strong Christian-Socialist strain, and populist. His most successful novel takes up the cause of the Hungarian peasants. He thought the future of Hungary was assured with them. His writings display clear anti-semitic tendencies.

36 Dezső Szabó, "Georg Brandes", *Nyugat*, 1912, I, p. 369.

37 *Ibid.*, p. 370.

38 *Ibid.*

39 Géza Feleky, "Georg Brandes", *Nyugat*, 1922, 1, p. 263.

40 *Ibid.*, p. 264.

41 *Ibid.*, p. 265.

42 *Ibid.*, p. 267.

43 C.S. "Brandes György, a plágium-hős" (The Hero of Plagiarism), *Magyar Kultura*, 1927, I, p. 570.

44 *Ibid.*

45 Aurél Kárpáti, "Georg Brandes", *A kételkedő kritikus* (The Sceptical Critic), Budapest 1928, p. 161.

46 *Ibid.*

47 *Ibid.*, p. 164.

48 *Ibid.*, p. 166.

49 See Per Dahl & John Mott, "Georg Brandes - a bio-bibliographical survey", *The Activist Critic*, *op.cit.*, pp. 303-60. For the Russian and Polish translations, see Bertil Nolin, *Den gode européen*, *op.cit.*, pp. 440-42, 444-51.

50 Proof that the borrowers included some of Brandes' most enthusiastic supporters can be found in a droll note on one of the library cards belonging to the University Library in Budapest, which says, "Lost on loan to József

Diner-Dénes".

51 In 1910 Samu Hazai was made Minister of Defence, in 1912 János Teleszki was made Finance Minister, in 1913 Ferenc Heltai was made Mayor of Budapest. All were of Jewish extraction. See John Lukács, *Budapest 1900*, *op.cit.*, p. 192.

52 *Ibid.*, p. 187.

53 Henry J. Gibbons, "Georg Brandes: The Reluctant Jew", *The Activist Critic*, *op.cit.*, p. 73.

54 Alexander L. Kielland to Edvard Brandes, 17.1. 1879. Cited from: Jørgen Knudsen, *Georg Brandes. I modsigelsernes tegn*, *op.cit.*, p. 83.

55 Brandes György, *Lord Beaconsfield. Disraeli Benjamin*, Budapest 1914, p. 206. Cited from: Georg Brandes, *SS*, 9, p. 516.

56 Edited the periodical *Kritika*, together with the literary historian Aurél Kárpáti, whose name also crops up in connection with Brandes' reception in Hungary.

57 Sándor Pethő, "Könyvszemle", *Uránia*, 5.12. 1911, pp. 245-47.

58 Sándor Pethő (1885-1940), educated as a historian. From 1918 he worked as a journalist on the newspapers *Magyarország* and *Magyar Nemzet*.

59 Sándor Pethő, *op.cit.*, p. 246.

60 Miklós Zrinyi (Zrinski), Hungarian-Croatian statesman, military commander and poet. His most important work is *Szigeti Veszedelem* (The Zrinyiad), an epic poem about the Hungarians' courageous battle against the Turks at Szigetvár in 1566.

61 Sándor Pethő, *op.cit.*, p. 246.

62 József Pogány (1886-1939), philologist, author and journalist. Social Democrat, later a prominent Marxist. A Commissioner during the Hungarian Soviet Republic. Emigrated to Moscow in 1920, where he worked for the Communist International. In 1937 he was arrested and disappeared during Stalin's purges.

63 József Pogány, "Brandes György", introduction to Brandes György, *Emberek, korok, irások* (Epochs, People, Writings), translated by Géza Lengyel, Budapest 1914, pp. 2-3.

64 *Ibid.*, p. 6.

65 -k, "Brandes, Korok Emberek írások", *Magyar Kultura*, 1914, 2,5, p. 163.

66 *Ibid.*, p. 161.

67 *Ibid.*, p. 162.

68 *Ibid.*

69 *Ibid.*

70 The poets Endre Ady and Mihály Babits, and the prose writers Zoltán Ambrus and Hugó Ignotus.

71 Aladár Kuncz (1886-1931), Hungarian and classical philologist, enthusiastic supporter of the modern poetry of Endre Ady. Interned during the First World War. His novel *Fekete kolostor* (The Black Convent, 1931) describes these five years. From 1923 he worked with great diligence to maintain and strengthen Hungarian culture among the Hungarian minority in Romania.

72 Henrik Hajdu (1890-1969), one of the most famous translators of Scandinavian literature into Hungarian. Politically active. One of the founders of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party. He was decorated with the Order of St. Olaf for his translation of the collected works of Ibsen.

73 Hajdu Henrik to Georg Brandes, 29.12. 1924, Brandes Archive.

CONCLUSION

Retrospect and Perspectives

When Georg Brandes died in 1927, he had been a valued source of inspiration and support to two generations of progressive Hungarians for more than half a century. As we have seen, his name cropped up regularly in the media, and throughout these years his energetic nature and his prolific writings in the field of literary criticism had been extremely influential, both directly and indirectly. If we are to take stock of this long period, certain features that characterize his reception in Hungary need to be identified and defined.

It can be said straight away that, paradoxical though it may seem, there was one field in which Georg Brandes, who after 1873 was generally referred to as "the world-famous, Danish literary critic", failed to exert *any* of his otherwise considerable influence on his Hungarian recipients and that was in his own special field of literary criticism.

This circumstance is not peculiar to his reception in Hungary. It also applies to the way he was received in Germany. Although consistently awarded little recognition by his 'professional peers', he was given that much more acclaim by non-philologists, especially poets.[1] Per Rydén, the Swedish literary critic, sees a parallel here to his reception in Sweden. He notes that it was only in the field of literary criticism that Brandes' influence in Sweden was limited and to some extent delayed, and he regrets that "despite his importance, a Swedish Georg Brandes never emerged".[2] Germany and Sweden were otherwise the countries outside Denmark on which Brandes had the biggest impact.

In Hungary, Brandes' writings attracted a regular readership among the intelligentsia. This group welcomed the "grand ideas of progress" with great enthusiasm and praised the author's unrivalled ability to paint a vivid picture of the broad intellectual currents in European literature. Many reviews drew attention to his elegant character sketches, his precise observations, his breadth of description and his infectious commitment, which leapt out at the reader. But it is also quite obvious from the reviews that the critics were hoping to find a philological-aesthetic manifesto similar to the one that formed the basis of Hungarian literary criticism. They marvelled at Brandes' ability to "paint with a broad brush" and to write in a lively and original way "so that the books do not have a soporific effect on the reader", but for that

very reason Brandes' critical writings were declared unacademic in Hungary, too. The Hungarian pattern thus follows the European one: the imposing, culturo-historical perspectives of Brandes' works captivated the readers, but it was thought that most of his writings would probably not have any lasting influence because they lacked scientific method. In short, the Hungarian reception of Brandes' literary-historical and critical writings was controversial. Several reviewers vigorously called into question the value of Brandes' literary criticism. His works were sometimes maliciously attacked and he was accused of being an out-and-out plagiarist, a superficial hack, an unscholarly dabbler, ready to draw hasty, facile conclusions. The conservative press was behind most of these accusations. This unsavoury savaging of the liberal Brandes was exploited as part of a wider party political struggle.

By contrast, Brandes' literary criticism and his exquisite flair were admired in the liberal and radical periodicals. It was emphasized time and again that although Brandes was Taine's disciple in attempting to understand authors in the context of their environment and upbringing, he had gradually moved away from his French master and, adopting a radical cultural criticism inspired by Nietzsche, he had begun to concentrate on the individuality and "personality"[3] of the author. Brandes knew how to create captivating portraits of authors based on the physical, psychological and intellectual qualities of the person in question. Readers tended to regard these analyses of personalities as 'literary critical novels'. They fascinated an entire generation of Hungarian critics: Diner-Dénes, Béla Lázár, József Pogány and many others. Brandes was acclaimed as the mentor of a group of 'moderne Geister' in Hungary, the assimilated Jewish intellectuals: writers, publishers, critics and journalists; in other words, 'cultural workers' in the best sense of the term.

The liberalism of this circle manifested itself in its strong social commitment and in its radical vision of the world. Brandes' ideas generally appealed to the idealistic activists for a 'young Hungary'. Their reading of Brandes can best be described as 'struggle-oriented', in that they wanted to apply what they read to their own Hungarian context. Brandes became part of a process of interpretation in the sense that by reading his work with topical issues in mind, they themselves developed a new kind of consciousness. They discovered that the works confronted them with their own culturo-political expectations. The most important element in their reception was their understanding of Brandes' literary-political programme, which they wished to apply to Hungarian conditions. Brandes' progressive ideas and his broad, European orientation gave them food for thought; and

his full support for the promising programme of *Élet* was the best possible precondition for the future success of that organ.

Brandes thus primarily made his mark as a literary-political activist and only to a lesser degree as a literary critic or writer of literary history. To the intellectual bourgeoisie, the role of activist was the one that really mattered.

All in all, it could be said that Brandes' reception was dominated more by 'the radical freethinker' than by the 'man of letters'. As the author of the monographs on the great personalities of European culture, he was naturally highly acclaimed. He was admired for his great breadth of vision, for his erudition and for his ability to express himself in a lively, original way. But it was primarily as a role model for the intellectual middle class that he had his breakthrough with the Hungarian recipients.

There was another area, however, where Brandes was to inscribe his name permanently on the memory of the Hungarians and that was via his activities as a communicator. He was inextricably associated with Scandinavian literature, especially with Ibsen. The communication took place via Germany, "the intellectual supermarket of Europe",[4] which made it possible for the Scandinavian literature of the breakthrough to be read, almost simultaneously, further east. Brandes' contribution had a further importance for the Hungarians: they suddenly had a feeling of *being involved*, of witnessing a breakthrough of new tendencies in European intellectual thought. The isolation and provincialism that so many progressive Hungarians had mocked for centuries were swept aside by "the huge blast of wind" to which the strength of the modern breakthrough, in the words of Stefan Zweig, could best be compared. For once, the Hungarians felt that they were not hopelessly behind the rest of Europe. Thanks to the publication of German versions, the country's readers could be among the first recipients of J.P. Jacobsen, Ibsen, Bjørnson, Kielland, Drachmann and many others.

Deutsche Rundschau and *Freie Bühne für modernes Leben* played an important part in the dissemination of the works of the Scandinavian breakthrough. These periodicals also offered Hungarian readers Brandes' own writings, as well as evaluations of his work by well-known, German literary critics.

From the middle of the 1870s, Hungarian theatres began to put on performances of Ibsen's plays. According to literary opinion polls, he was one of the most popular authors at the beginning of the 20th century. Knowledge of his works had become so widespread that they were beginning to be parodied. Frigyes Karinthy wrote a sophisticated literary parody[5] of *The Wild Duck*, which he ingeniously blended with *Ghosts*. Here we have all the ingredients of the naturalistic theatre, including detailed stage directions

and careful descriptions of scene settings. The whole of Hungary enjoyed this brilliant, wittily executed caricature. They knew their Ibsen inside out and were thus able to appreciate Karinthy's literary subtleties.

Brandes was responsible not only for spreading knowledge of Ibsen to the Hungarians, but also for introducing them to Nietzsche, Kierkegaard and Strindberg. The service he rendered in drawing Nietzsche's attention first to Kierkegaard and then to Strindberg was given due recognition by the Hungarian recipients. The unusually early reception of these three poet-philosophers would not have been possible without Brandes' work as a 'cultural missionary'.

Brandes' role as mediator also had another consequence. The literature of the breakthrough, whose cause he took up, was concerned with "the great problems of the age" and it was supposed to put these subjects up for debate. This was a new demand on literature, which was thought to be rather daring and titillating in the context of Hungarian reality. The derivative, patriotic, Romantic poetry was now in decline and a new kind of realistic and naturalistic literature was gaining ground in the Western-oriented periodicals. The French and Russian naturalists began to leave their mark on Hungarian ideology, alongside the Scandinavian authors.

That this modern literature was regarded as progressive can best be illustrated by the fact that most translations were published within the sphere of the bourgeois radicals, in *Husadik Század*, *A Hét*, *Jövendő* and *Nyugat*. Hungary had succeeded in participating in the reception of a new literary movement and a new approach to literature, alongside other European nations. Although Brandes did not make much of an impression on Hungarian literary criticism, his ideas on mimesis did at least help shape the aesthetic theories of Georg Lukács.

If we let the more than fifty years (1873-1927) file past us, a kind of mosaic emerges which undeniably contains all the colours of the spectrum. But it is still possible to make out one basic colour and the outline of a portrait. We can see the "eternal critic" whose importance extended way beyond the boundaries of literary criticism. He was good at absorbing information and at lending an issue his wholehearted support. The worshipper of the 'Übermensch', the misanthropist, the lone wolf, the leader of the radicals, the apostle of free thought; these are just some of the labels that have been attached to him, each one referring to one small facet of his personality. But all in all, perhaps the best description depicts him as the tireless provider of information or the good European.

The latter label is an old one. It has been used ever since Nietzsche nominated Brandes for this honorable task. Many other great Europeans,

including Clémenceau, Edmund Gosse, Emile Verhaeren, Thomas Mann and Stefan Zweig have over the years thought this an appropriate term. The term 'the good European' refers first and foremost to Brandes' supernational understanding of intellectual life. It certainly does not mean that he did not have any understanding of the particular cultures of individual nations. On the contrary, he always had an eye for the small cultural units, the national literatures that stood in the shadow of the great cultural nations, such as, for example, the position of the Flemings in relation to Belgium. He was especially interested in nations that had to fight for their own identity and that were politically or culturally oppressed. In his view, every nation ought to have the opportunity to develop according to its own inclinations. Brandes' support for the Poles was unparallelled. He wrote a deeply committed, informative book about the country's political and cultural condition. He conscienscious devoted time and energy to introducing hitherto unknown national literatures into the European community, since he was well aware of the smaller cultural areas' need for 'publicity'. The good European regarded it as his duty to act as obstetrician to the literatures that came from the 'outskirts' of Europe.

But the Hungarians needed something else. They did not ask Brandes to write about their literature or to introduce it in international periodicals, as the Flemish poet Pol de Mont had done in 1885. What they wanted was *to gain access to the intellectual currents in Europe through the agency of Brandes*. Throughout the entire history of Brandes' reception in Hungary, there is evidence that the Hungarians actually used Brandes in order to make contact with Western Europe. In the recipients' horizon of experience, Brandes represented a springboard to Europe.

Hungarian intellectuals have always striven for more contact with and more openness towards other countries. They have strongly opposed the policy that led to Hungary being regarded as a provincial, self-sufficient country. One way of eradicating this feeling of 'being outside' was to turn one's attention towards the European literary market. The establishment of a regular column with the heading *Foreign Literature* in the *Bulletin of the Secondary School Teachers' Association* was a step in this direction, and it was actually Brandes' *Emigrant Literature* that inspired this.

Brandes' *Main Currents* brought modern literary and cultural currents close to home. *Figyelő* published an extract from this work as early as 1873. After Germany, Hungary was the first country to do this, which was testimony to the editors' alertness and general outlook. When Diner-Dénes approached Brandes in 1890, that too was inspired by *Main Currents*; this time by the final volume, *Young Germany*. The work had a particular appeal

for Diner-Dénes. He was in the process of establishing a periodical which was to be the mouthpiece for 'young Hungary'. As a bourgeois liberal, he had not forgotten the events of 1848. He wanted to secure Brandes' interest in the project since he knew that an article from the most highly esteemed cultural figure in Europe would be the best way of ensuring the success of the new periodical. It was Brandes' voice that should resound in young Hungary's new periodical.

There was a permanent feeling that it was necessary to demonstrate to the outside world that Hungary had its own cultural identity; that it was not just an appendage to Austria, but an independent country within the framework of the Dual Monarchy. The invitation to Brandes to visit Hungary was intended to strengthen this image. That the reception provoked by his second visit was rather stormy, was simply due to the fact that opinions had diverged into two camps. Those who did not wish to recognize Brandes as the European celebrity let their gall percolate into spiteful reviews, while those who were now hearing him with their own ears were enthusiastic. Brandes' visit was thus exploited in the internal battle between the liberals and the conservatives. This political rivalry at the expense of Brandes became even worse after the turn of the century, when progressive, radical ideas were branded anti-Hungarian, morally repugnant and cosmopolitan by the conservative camp. These euphemisms, which were designed to conceal the anti-semitic undertones, were not just aimed at Brandes "the foreign body, the European" but also at the group of Western-oriented radicals who were looking for a bulwark against excessive nationalism and chauvinism in Brandes and his works.

The reception of Brandes in Hungary was and is only a small episode compared to the reception of this great European in the world at large. But from a Hungarian point of view, it was important. In Brandes, the Hungarians acquired an ally, an 'ancestor' in Europe. His addresses in Copenhagen - Havnegade and Strandboulevarden - were known in the circles who continued to keep in touch with him, many years after his visits to Budapest.

Among the most faithful correspondents were Brandes' female recipients. They were deeply fascinated by the great "luminary". And when they took "the master" to their hearts in their letter-fantasies, passions arose that heightened their sense of the value of life and of their own worth, strengthened their desire to read and encouraged them in their work of translating Scandinavian literature.

Brandes made the Hungarians feel genuine members of the cultural fellowship of Europe. An interview from 1926[6] indicates that he had taken

note of the 'silver age' of Hungarian literature and that, thanks to his breadth of vision and critical powers, he could speak with authority on Endre Ady, the most original mind in modern, Hungarian poetry.

Looking back from the vantage point of a hundred years later, one cannot help seeing the way Brandes was received in Hungary as symptomatic of a country that even today suffers from a latent inferiority complex *vis-à-vis* European culture. Brandes represented Europe itself to those Hungarians who were interested in countries outside Hungary, and in this role he met their needs. For throughout the history of Hungary there has been a 'Drang nach Westen'. Although two world wars dissolved borders and erected an iron curtain, Hungary has never given up hope of one day forming part of the European cultural circle.

It is against this background that the Hungarian recipients' relationship to Brandes should be seen. They discovered that he was a figure of great topical interest and that they could *use* him in a culturo-political context, since his writings and his activities as a mediator brought Europe into Hungary. He was the 'voice from outside' to which the Hungarians listened.

Notes to Conclusion:

[1] Klaus Bohnen, "Georg Brandes og hans betydning for den tyske litteratur" (Georg Brandes and his Importance for German Literature), *Danmark-Tyskland (1864-1920)*, ed. H.P. Clausen, Copenhagen 1980, p. 107.

[2] Per Rydén, "En genembrottsman med förhinder", *The Modern Breakthrough in Scandinavian Literature*, *op.cit.*, p. 311.

[3] Klaus Bohnen, "'Persönlichkeit' bei Georg Brandes. Zu einer Kategorie der Kritik und ihrer Rezeption in Deutschland", *The Activist Critic*, *op.cit.*, pp. 237-52.

[4] József Pogány, *Emberek és korok* (People and Epochs), Budapest 1919, p. 80.

[5] Frigyes Karinthy, "A kénguru" (The Kangaroo), *Igy írtok ti...* (You Write Like This...), Budapest 1912 (1961), pp. 149-55.

[6] "Georg Brandes nyilatkozik a Szinházi Életnek" (Georg Brandes Expresses his Views to "Theatre Life"), *Szinházi Élet* (Theatre Life), 1926, 7.

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(UB) - Universitetsbiblioteket (The University Library), Oslo.

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GB 7.4.1900	Falk, Miksa	OSzK
GB 15.10.1888	Fischer, Sándor	OSzK
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GB Huszár, Wilhelm (Vilmos) KB
1.7.1017,

GB Jászai Mari OSzK
Ostertag 1900 6.10.1900 9.3.1907

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GB Marczali, Henrik MTA
1.3.1907

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5.11.1890 12.12.1890 3.1.189[1] 26.2.1897

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31.3.1898	14.7.1898	24.10.1898	19.11.1898	20.11.1898
30.11.1898	8.3.1899	21.9.1899	23.10.1899	31.1.1900
14.2.1900	20.4.1900	11.5.1900	30.11,1900	7.1.1901
11.12.1902	23.1.1903	5.9.1903	17.10.1903	17.1.1907
18.3.1908	24.7.1917			

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8.6.1900	26.10.1900	7.3.1907	9.3.1907	11.3.1907
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Jókai, Mór	GB	KB
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Katona, Lajos	Harmann, Antal	EK
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Lázár, Béla	GB	KB
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4.1.1900	2.2.1900	30.3.1900	7.8.1900	21.7.1901
1.8.1901	13.8.1901	8.2.1902	11.7.1902	30.7.1902
8.8.1902	5.3.1903	23.3.1903	3.5.1904	1.7.1904
25.8.1904	29.8.1904	4.11.1906	1.1.1907	16.1.1907
20.1.1907	6.2.1907	22.2.1907	1.3.1907	17.7.1911
14.11.1922	undated			

Magyar Hírlap	GB	KB

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